

THE GRAND OLD MAN

A GLADSTONE SPECTRUM

by

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and

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With Four Plates



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A RAY of light is broken by a prism into the seven colours of the rainbow. That is the spectrum.

The story of Mr. Gladstone is a spectrum too. *Blue* for the Toryism of his upbringing; *Indigo* the shadow of slavery that clouded his youth. *Green* for Ireland which dominated his middle life; and *Orange* for that country's Unionism which broke him in his old age. *Violet* denotes his High Church principles; and in most of England *Yellow* is the Liberal Party colour. *Red*, the Empire's colour on the map, suggests his reaction to Imperialism.

Since Mr. Gladstone's history is the history of Nineteenth Century England, our authorities have been so numerous that a list of them would become tedious.

We should, however, like to express particular gratitude to Mr. Cox of the London Library for his untiring advice and expert guidance through the memoirs of the period; and to our clerk, Mr. George Andrew, for the heavy load of work which he has so tirelessly borne.

THE TEMPLE

1936

ARISTOCRACY possessed England. The sweep of its estates took in village and town. From the Tudor gateways and Palladian porticoes of its country seats went forth the word that was the law as far as the boundaries of the neighbouring property; the orders that spelt existence for coachmen, postilions, grooms, gamekeepers, gardeners, farm-hands, butlers, cook-maids, hall-boys, and running footmen. In the Season, when it went up to London to govern England, Mayfair awoke with the mayfly to its recurring flash of life; and in the mansions in the squares candles flickered over stars and ribbons, over diamonds, dim canvases, pale silver, and the dull sheen of mahogany.

It sat upon the King's Bench; it commanded the King's Armies; it ruled the King's Church. It was the House of Lords that had the final say: it nominated the House of Commons to whom it said it.

It interpreted the laws that itself had made. The Bar was recruited from the Universities, which were fed by the public schools. Oxford and Cambridge, Eton and Westminster, Winchester and Harrow, annually delivered their quota of recruits to the Temple and Gray's and Lincoln's Inn. Time turned them into King's Counsel and Serjeants-at-law; and in due course they rose to the glories of scarlet and ermine.

Out of the Fourth Form and the Remove, Oppidan and Town Boy stepped ready to bear the colours of the Guards and the Line. As gout or the enemy's bullets carried their superiors away, drafts on the family bankers bought their successive steps to field rank. Their mistresses, their private supply-wagons, their very packs of hounds, clogged the march of the King's troops. Time turned them into Generals with cocked hats and

golden epaulettes; and in due course a favoured few found rest in Westminster Abbey.

From Oxford and Cambridge Colleges, whence Papist and Dissenter alike was rigidly debarred, a steady flow of Rectors and Vicars swept over the face of all the shires—a perpetual witness to the patronage of nobility and the prudence of a wisely chosen friendship with some gentleman commoner. The Church sat upon the County Bench and rode to hounds and pronounced its opinion on the squire's port. Cadets of the great families rose as Time thinned the ranks of the hierarchy to be fat Prebends or sleek Archdeacons in grey closes. Time brought them lawn sleeves and a seat in the House of Lords beside their elder brothers; and in due course the most fortunate of all mounted the Throne of Saint Augustine.

Parliament was still the Council of the Plantagenets. Aristocracy was incarnate in the House of Lords, which appointed an absolute majority in the House of Commons. The franchise had been archaic when Oliver Cromwell had vainly attempted to reform it a hundred and fifty years before. There were eighty-two county members. Each county had two; Yorkshire had two and Rutland had two. Every man with a freehold of forty shillings' value had a vote, but in the upshot the two greatest county magnates usually appointed a member apiece. Sometimes one family appointed them both.

There were four hundred and three Borough members. There were Scot and Lot Boroughs; and Potwolloper Boroughs; and Burgage Boroughs; and Corporation Boroughs; Boroughs that had ceased to exist; and Boroughs that were under the sea. They usually returned two members apiece. Bristol returned two members, and the Hole in the Wall at Gatton returned two members; Preston returned two members, and the grass mound at Old Sarum returned two members.

had broken in face of Wellesley's platoons led by Eton boys.

Only four years before Pitt had died at Putney, worn out at forty-six, and Nelson had fallen on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*. But not before they had secured the future for their noble masters. Since that October afternoon when the guns had split a Spanish fog no tricolour had been seen upon the high seas. Since that November evening when England's youngest Prime Minister had urged her to save Europe by her example, there had been an obstinate intensity in the national resolve.

The end was already in sight. Slowly, steadily, France was being hemmed in by the established order. Soon the insidious poison of democracy that had but lately contaminated the veins of all Europe would be driven back and localized in the plague-spot where it had first arisen; and it would only remain to lance the foul eruption with a hundred thousand bayonets. Then life would go on as comfortably as before—to Eternity. . . .

But under the wheels of passing coaches, beneath the horse-hoofs of the fox-hunters, the earth sometimes rumbled. Change was burrowing underground. None heeded. The surface remained unaltered. Rents continued to come in regularly and wheat stood at five pounds the quarter. It could not matter if on northern moors a man came occasionally upon a smoky scar. Or if, riding to the meet, he met queer, gnarled creatures, stunted and sooty, with picks upon their shoulders. Or if, far off from behind the elm trees of the park, there came the dull beat of one of the new factories. The life of the ruling classes went on: a life of knee-breeches and beaver hats; of tilburys and tandems; of Corinthians in three-caped coats fighting bouts with 'the fancy'; of dice-boxes rattling at Watier's; of quadrilles performed at Almack's, while George Brummel looked out from White's bow-window; and the new flying stage went gliding down to Brighton. The blaze of novelty and

fashion seemed to transfigure it all. Yet all unknown to them it was the last brilliance of sunset, and not the clear light of noonday. The Future was even then taking shape in the clatter of spinning-jennies and the whirr of power-looms beside the northern falls; and out of the pall of smoke, as yet no bigger than a man's hand, that was already looming over the Warwickshire orchards and blackening the fleeces of the sheep on Ilkley Moor.

BLUE

I

LIVERPOOL was the gateway to the old world. Into the mouth of the Mersey came tall ships from Salem and Jamestown with cargoes of cotton and tobacco, hides and whale-oil. Loungers along the quay caught the lilt of shanties wafted over the water as the Yankees paced around the capstan and hauled in their sails.

O Shenandoah, I took a notion
To sail across the stormy ocean.
A-way you rolling river,
A-way I'm bound to go
Cross the wide Miss-sour-i.

And when the tanned men from New England stepped ashore they found old England was there spread out before them; timber-framed house-fronts where Turks' heads creaked aloft and wooden Highlanders stood sentry in doorways, sharp cobbles in dark courts, clammy black dirt underfoot and great heaps of refuse left festering in the carriage-way. Fearsome ruffians and reeling drunkards bumped about the narrow streets. Slavers and crimps and panders and privateersmen jostled in the alleys. Seven thousand people lived in warehouse cellars; and there was a drinking den to every seven houses.

To the men who had lately called this their Motherland the stiff bearing of the citizens, the cringing of man before man, the rigidity of the city's ancient customs seemed curiously antique.

Yet Liverpool was the gateway to the new world. The Lancashire squire who less than forty years before had seen the bonfires blazing for the capture of New York found the city bursting with an unfamiliar life that beat beneath its ancient forms. Long tentacles of blackened brick stretched out into the green fields of

Lancashire to suck the life of gaunt villages where poverty stalked in clogs and shawl.

New buildings of compelling ugliness reared their tall heads along Castle Street and in the squares at Moslake Fields. Banks and shops and warehouses were blotting out the cottages where honeysuckle had lately twined about the thatch. And people mentioned with awe the great new names, men who had never owned an acre, the new capitalists: Rathbone, Roscoe, Cressy, Rutson, Cropper, Martin, Ewart, and Gladstone.

John Gladstone was forty-five in the December of 1809. He had interests in the old world and the new. He dealt in corn and timber and cotton and sugar. He had come from Scotland less than thirty years before with five hundred pounds in his pocket, and now he was worth hundreds of thousands. In the process of his transformation he had evolved from a Presbyterian into a strict Churchman, from a fervid Whig into a High Tory. He lived in a solid, square-fronted house that he had built himself at number 62 Rodney Street. And there, two days before the year was over, his second boy was born. The child was christened William Ewart.

• II

When Mr. Perceval's Ministry went to the polls in the autumn of 1812 the boy was nearly three. John Gladstone's star had still continued to rise. He was now a freeman of Liverpool and at the head of the Tory Party in the city. The times were turbulent. Radicalism and Reform were about and the party managers were at pains to show that the growing port was sound in its reaction. To withstand the persuasive eloquence of Mr. Brougham, the Whig lawyer, and the shrewd wit of his colleague Mr. Cressy they sought a national figure. It fell to John Gladstone to approach the mercurial Mr. George Canning, who had already

held the seals of the Foreign Office under His Grace the Duke of Portland.

But the rising star of Toryism, who was already safely ensconced in Newport (Isle of Wight!), was not too tractable. 'I will accept the seat if tendered freely and gratuitously,' he wrote.

'Mr. Gladstone says that ten thousand pounds will be wanted. . . . The subscriptions in Liverpool may amount to six thousand or seven thousand pounds; the remainder they must have in London. But how? . . . If it is meant that I am to subscribe it is plain that they do not believe the sincerity of my declaration that I will not be at expense.'

John Gladstone and his friends took the hint; their fighting fund was duly implemented, and on the 7th October they turned out in their carriages to welcome the upholder of Church and King. Unfortunately, Mr. Canning failed to arrive, and it was left to John Gladstone to expound the virtues of his ten thousand pounds champion. As a Whig squib put it:

To-day the great Canning has not shown his face,
And I, a mere shadow, stand up in his place.

On the 8th Mr. Canning did arrive, and until the 16th they were 'going every night to the different clubs to speechify . . . from half-past six to one in the morning at least'. Liverpool was harangued from balconies, bay-windows, and hustings. Free gin flowed like the Mersey. 'Mobs were violent in the streets. Windows were broken, candidates pelted . . . resort was had to the pavement and the area rails.'

George Canning's a man of some talents, 'tis true,
But his mother and sisters are pensioned by you;
And freemen of spirit will choose, I presume,
Men free and unpensioned like Creevy and Brougham,

roared the red mob, flushed with liberty and rum. The presumption was false; both seats fell to the Tories, and

Mr. Canning came in with a majority of exactly five hundred.

That night they brought the new member in a flare of torches and a flutter of blue favours to Mr. Gladstone's house in Rodney Street. From the balcony the new member, compact and bald, addressed them. 'Gentlemen it has been attempted to deter you from the choice which you have done me the honour to make. . . . It is one of the peculiar boasts of this country, one of the prime fruits of its free Constitution, one main security for its continuing free . . .' The roar of cheering surged up Rodney Street and blotted out his words.

He stepped down. Inside, in the long dining-room, John Gladstone sat at his table before an elated company. Round the tureens and the side-dishes and over the cruets and *épergnes* the hearty well-fed countenances of Liverpool men beamed to see their ten thousand pounds so well invested. There was food and drink in plenty, and toasts and compliments in abundance, still more food, still more speeches. And then suddenly the mahogany door swung open, a hush fell, there on the threshold a baby held in a nurse's arms blinked at the unaccustomed blaze. Amid merry cheering he was brought to the table and lifted on to one of the chairs. 'Say Ladies and gentlemen.'

'Ladies and gentlemen.'

'Well done! Bravo! Hurrah!'

So, to the chink of glasses, the banging of knives and forks on the table before the amused eyes of the great Mr. Canning, William Ewart Gladstone made his maiden speech.

III

Long after Mr. Canning had posted off to London and immortality, number 62 Rodney Street retained its new importance. John Gladstone had become a civic being. His conversation soared to an elevating and improving

level that overawed the children. 'He could not understand nor tolerate those who perceiving an object to be good did not at once and actively pursue it.' The family pew in St. George's was never empty at sermon-time; and William Ewart played on the sands at the mouth of the Mersey or absorbed tales from the *Arabian Nights* and the *Scottish Chiefs* between periodic visits to his father's Sunday school. 'At six I remember praying earnestly,' he wrote, 'but it was for no higher object than to be spared the loss of a tooth.'

This was the year in which John Gladstone signalized his established position in a magnanimous gesture to the Established religion by building and endowing a church at Seaforth. At the season when the dog-roses were starring the hedgerows in the Bootle lanes, the Gladstones set off in their black and yellow chaise for the city of Cambridge to seek an incumbent for the new living.

The greatest evangelical in contemporary Cambridge was Dr. Simeon of King's. And into his august presence the Gladstone family were ushered with discreet reverence. The venerable doctor who was 'more ecclesiastically got up than many a dean' gave the question that full consideration that he was wont to bestow on matters that concern the soul and indicated that a certain Mr. Jones, then curate in a Leicester parish, was best fitted to advance God's Kingdom in the residential suburbs of Liverpool. Off to Leicester the family went, and there in a large church under the weighty scrutiny of his prospective patron the Reverend Mr. Jones—'an excellent specimen of the excellent evangelical school'—preached a sermon from the text 'Grow in grace'. Mr. Jones's own growth in grace began as soon as the service was over, and only ceased when at the age of ninety he died an archdeacon. Master William Ewart, too, what with Dr. Simeon's piety and Mr. Jones's grace, and Cambridge, and Leicester, and the post-chaise, was deeply moved at the importance of the new church at

Seaforth and fell to wondering whether he could not 'have it to live in' after his father died.

The Seaforth business satisfactorily concluded, John Gladstone repaired with his wife and child to the house of his brother-in-law in Russell Square, Bloomsbury. They were in time to attend a service of public thanksgiving at St. Paul's. The established order had fought its great battle among the ploughlands at Waterloo, and Paris, the stronghold of equality, was occupied by the armies of three monarchs. From a small gallery by the choir the boy gazed down upon the curly wig of the Prince Regent, while the organ exultantly poured forth a triumphant *Te Deum*.

Back in Liverpool, Dr. Simeon's shadow once more fell across the boy's life. Another evangelical clergyman had turned up ('he had, I suppose, been passed by Dr. Simeon') and established himself in the Gladstone home. The Reverend Mr. Rawson was a man of strong 'No Popery' opinions. He became first the private tutor, and then, when he set up a school of his own in the solitude of the sands five miles away from the Liverpool Exchange, the pedagogue of William Ewart. 'Everything was unobjectionable', wrote his pupil. 'I suppose I learnt something there.' But Mr. Rawson's sermons boomed over his charges' heads like the waves of the seashore below the house and left little behind them beyond a 'priggish love of argument'. At the beginning of the winter half in 1821 the boy went to Eton.

IV

It was the post-war world. Talleyrand and Metternich were piloting Europe between the Scylla of Liberal Nationalism and the Charybdis of the class war. Their ship lurched clumsily across a restless sea, kings uneasy in the after cabin, Herr Anselm Meyer Rothschild self-confident at the wheel.

George III had just died at Windsor in the sixtieth year of his reign and 'Prinney's' fat curly head was at last on the coins and silver. Lord Liverpool was fumbling at Downing Street with the destinies of the new England that laboured in the birth-pangs of the Industrial Revolution. The spirit of Nick Ludd was smashing up the new machines in the Midlands, and landless labourers, adrift after the late Enclosures, fired farmers' ricks in the shires. And all the time the grimy towns still spread like loathsome fungi.

Keats had coughed his last; and in another year Shelley was to lie drowned on an Italian shore. The comet of Byron hung over southern Europe with a trail of broken-hearted women, unfinished cantos, monkeys, and parakeets. Crome had died with the vanishing of the pastures that he painted; but Turner was still in the noonday of his sunsets.

And Rossini's trills and Weber's melodies were being wafted from the Opera House in Haymarket to every genteel withdrawing-room in the land when Thurmwood's coach set down the twelve-year-old Gladstone at the 'Christopher' one September afternoon in 1821.

The boy had come to take his place in the great world—or at least that part of it where men wore pantaloons and Hessian boots and swallow-tailed blue coats with brass buttons, and where women in sarsenet pelisses and gigot sleeves simpered from under bee-hive bonnets; the world where one dined at seven off mulligatawny and turtle soup, boiled fowls with oyster sauce, beef-steaks and apple tarts and was just learning to dance the lancers.

The Eton on whose playing-fields the battle of Waterloo had been won six years before was everything that a present-day public school is not. There were no organized games, and Dr. Arnold with all his notions about 'the team spirit' and prefects was still wherever he

was. Henry VI's foundation had seen no need to modify the curriculum that Henry VI laid down; the boys learnt Latin and Greek, and fencing and nothing else. Every one ragged the maths. usher. 'May I wear cap and gown?' he asked the head. 'That's as you please.' 'And must the boys touch their hats to me?' 'That's as they please.'

Colleger and Oppidan led a life where there was plenty of fighting, plenty of flogging, and very little food. At Eton the coarse merriment and good-fellowship of the tavern blended with the arrogant assurance of an aristocracy that owned all England.

The handsome, pale-faced, curly-headed boy who jumped down so eagerly from the coach and bade a waiting 'cad' carry his bags up to Shurey's House came completely pagan to this Athenian commonwealth. Into the boisterous round of Eton days and nights Gladstone plunged like a duckling into water. At the Naval Academy, Portsmouth, his elder brother was being mercilessly ragged 'for righteousness' sake'; but William Ewart had no inclination to be a Christian martyr. Dr. Simeon's henchmen had failed to make him take himself seriously. 'I was not a devotional child', as he himself significantly said.

'You will be glad to hear', he told an aunt in Scotland, 'of an instance of the highest and most honourable spirit in a Highlander. . . . His name is MacDonald. He is tough as iron and about the strongest fellow in the school of his size. Being pushed out of his seat by a fellow of the name of Arthur he airily asked him to give it him again, which being refused with the additional insult that he might try what he could to take it from him, MacDonald very properly took him at his word and began to push him out of his seat. Arthur struck at him with all his might. . . . MacDonald returned Arthur's blow with interest . . . made him bleed at the nose and his mouth. He finished the affair by knocking the

arrogant Arthur over the form. . . . They are to have a regular battle in the playing-fields.'

'Regular battles' went on all the time in a corner of the playing-field under the red wall alongside the Slough Road. The Windsor coach used to draw up for the passengers to watch the boys 'at it'. A ring was formed, a timekeeper called the rounds, and the combatants fought until one or other was either exhausted or, in Gladstone's words, 'too badly bruised and knocked about to appear in school', or got his face 'broken and quite black'.

Tutors were all in Holy orders; but Gladstone found the 'actual teaching of Christianity' all but dead, 'though none of its forms had been surrendered'.

To break out of 'm'dames' at night and drive a tandem, to slip into Windsor and drink at the 'White Hart', or to poach the King's deer in the park, were common exploits. On festive occasions young Eton would wrench off door-knockers or bear away shop-signs. There were continuous and bloodthirsty encounters with town 'cads'.

When such things reached Authority the invariable penalty was flogging. One of Gladstone's contemporaries remarked that 'that age considered it rather a pleasant pastime than otherwise'. A Fifth Form boy awarded ten strokes of the birch before the assembled fourth amused them by counting each stroke aloud as it fell, ending on number ten with a derisive note of mock astonishment.

'Gladstone, put down your own name on the list of names', stormed his form-master when he discovered that the boy had left the names of two friends out of the daily flogging list; and duly flogged he was.

The head master, Dr. Keate, was a confirmed sadist. In his gown and cocked hat and bands, he looked a cross between Napoleon and a washerwoman. Keate was Eton and Eton was Keate.

'To Dr. Keate,' said Gladstone, 'nature accorded a stature of only five feet, but by costume, voice, manner,

and character he made himself the capital figure on the Eton stage.'

'I'll flog you! I'll flog you!' he barked continually at shivering small boys. 'Boys,' he would say, 'you should always be pure in heart; whatever difficulties surround you, whatever temptations assail you, you must always be pure in heart, and if you are not pure in heart I'll flog you.' On one occasion he flogged seventy-two in an afternoon before an admiring roomful of their fellows. When his old pupils gave him dinner in Paris during the British occupation he expressed his pleasure at seeing them all again. 'But, gentlemen, your bottoms are so confoundedly alike that I cannot recall one of you from t'other.'

Life at Eton for an Oppidan had all the leisure and privacy of Oxford or Cambridge to-day. Gladstone shared a room with a friend and breakfasted and worked and read there. His father supplied him with wine, and of an evening his friends would drop in for cards or chess. There was plenty of time to read his books for a boy who felt inclined, and Gladstone was of the minority that did.

Molière and Racine he approved. Blair's *Sermons* he found 'not very substantial'. And Gibbon, 'elegant and acute as he is', proved 'not so clear, so able, so attractive, as Hume'. But the basis of all his reading was Greek. The unconscious model for his whole philosophy was the classic ideal as it had come down through Rome from Athens. England's governing class in those days knew no other inspiration, and their sons were inevitably taught to travel the same road. That an envoy to Paris or to Vienna knew no word of French or German mattered nothing; that he should be unacquainted with the *Iliad* or unable to turn a *Times* leader into the correct sequence of dactyls and spondees would stamp him as unfitted for such a post since he could clearly be no gentleman. The young Etonian was steeped in the social background of Athens under Pericles; he knew

nothing about the social background of his father's labourers. And if in due course he grew accustomed to quote appropriate tags out of Horace across the floor of the House of Commons it was only because he knew nothing else to quote. Best of all Gladstone knew his Homer and his Plutarch. Even as he was hammering out his themes, seventy-seven English banks were crashing, dragging hundreds of thousands into ruin, and the Lancashire Yeomanry fired murderously upon the unemployed. But the brightest intelligences at Eton were debating the possible consequences to the ancient world if Alexander the Great had marched west instead of east. Athenian was the arrogant assumption of the Etonian Commonwealth that branded as barbarian all who dwelt outside its borders. Athenian was the worship of their finest athletes. Athenian, too, were the sentimental friendships that existed between boy and boy.

The real Athens, unfortunately, was governed by a Turkish pasha; and Lord Byron, with his Quixotic crusade for her liberties, and his uniform of pseudo-classic design, was in the spring of 1824 the incarnation of aristocratic romanticism. Insurgent mechanics in the Midlands were rogues to be transported or hung; but insurgent Greeks in the Morea were heroes to encourage and adore:

The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece,
Where burning Sappho loved and sang,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose and Phoebus sprang.

Among that insurgent scum stained with blood from the throats of defenceless men that they had slit, the English aristocrat moved like an Achilles though with Vulcan's limp, the eyes of England's gilded youth upon him. Alas, before he could draw the sword to make a new Thermopylae he wasted away in the marshes of Missolonghi and the world that had looked for his triumph could only gaze upon his funeral.

It fell in the year of that triennial masquerade up to Salt Hill which Eton with its classic affectation called *ad Montem*. In a long procession the school streamed down to Slough, the captain in general's uniform at its head with eight pages 'looking like pretty little girls in boys' dresses of pink and blue and violet and red with plumed hats and boots of buff'. The sixth followed 'in regimentals of their own choosing'; and then the fifth 'in scarlet with shorts of kerseysmere and stockings of silk'; and the juniors behind 'in blue-tailed coats and gilt buttons carrying wands'. As the procession moved along 'runners, in fancy-ball dress', waylaid the passers by with the cries of 'Salt! Salt!' ('Salt' was money contributed to send the captain up to King's). Arrived at Salt Hill, a flag was flourished on top of the mound before a gay assembly, and a mass of gigs and tandems and curricles. Everybody was happy to participate in this glorified flag day. Only Gladstone had his doubts. Dressed in the garb of a Greek patriot to show how he sympathized with a small nation struggling to be free, he could not but find the artificial atmosphere of the whole thing 'slightly ridiculous: a wretched waste of time and money; a most ingenious contrivance to exhibit us as baboons and a bore in the full sense of the word'. But though the Greek dress seemed silly to the wearer, the lesson of the Greek cause and of Lord Byron's death burned themselves upon his mind. With him such romanticism was more than a fashionable affectation. He began to loathe repression—abroad. The rights of distant minorities woke a strange energy in his heart. He read Lord Edward Fitzgerald's stanzas written on the night of his arrest:

Oh! Ireland, my country, the hour
Of thy pride and thy splendour has passed,
And the chain which was spurned in thy moment
of power
Hangs heavy around thee at last.

He copied them out and sent them to his brother. But such sympathy was strictly confined to rebels in foreign countries. In the *Liverpool Courier* he was writing vigorous letters in defence of slave-owning; and in the school debating society he was defending the cavalier cause and the attempted arrest of the five members. 'I give my vote to the Earl of Clarendon because he gave his support to the falling cause of monarchy, because he stood by his Church and his King, because he adopted the part that loyalty, reason, and moderation combined to dictate.'

Away in London, Mr. George Canning was hearing all about the promise of old John Gladstone's brilliant son. To one who held that the Tory Party were the Royal Martyr's heirs such true blue sentiments augured well for a great career in the cause of privilege and aristocracy. One sunlit day in the summer half of 1826 the bald-headed statesman looked in at Shurey's to ask if young Gladstone was about. Young Gladstone was not about and Mr. Canning went on his way. The threads of their lives had crossed for the last time: before the next summer was out Mr. Canning and the Toryism he dreamed of were buried together in Westminster Abbey.

The year 1827 was Gladstone's last at Eton. He had steadily worked his way into the oligarchy that ran the school, and the days went by in a round of the classics, endless talks, boating on the Thames and walks in the country. Now he would be immersed in Voltaire's *Life of Charles XII*, now with George Selwyn he would be watching a cricket match, or strolling over Datchet Meads with Charles Kean discussing Garrick's technique, or sculling up to Surley with Arthur Hallam. As the days grew shorter, with the length of time that remained for him at Eton, he yielded up one by one the charges that had come to seem as lasting as life itself. In the November he gave up editing the *Eton Miscellany*. He

made his last speech to the debating society. The usual bustle heralded the end of term. Just below Weston's yard the road was full of chaises and tandems. The juniors were collecting tin horns and pea-shooters for the journey home. Boys stood about, their beaver hats covered with oilskins, woollen comforters about their throats, in great coats with capes and velvet collars, bidding each other good-bye.

Gladstone looked sadly round his empty room and wrote the last letter that he was to post in Eton:

'My room with four or five boxes of books packed or half-packed in it—my tables covered with papers—my empty bookshelves, and dismantled walls—all forcibly combine to produce the idea and strengthen the appearances of my positive departure, and melancholy that departure is. I have had a very handsome, and also pretty numerous, set of what we here call "leaving books" (and I believe you have been by far too long connected with Eton not to understand the term) sent me, and some of them really very splendid. Altogether I have reason to believe that I am leaving many valuable friends behind me; and though it is to me a cause of deep regret to leave them, yet it is a consolation to know that they are *friends*.

'I never, never, can forget the immeasurable delight, and I think I may say advantages, which I have derived from my Eton life. It may be easy to mention, but it would be impossible perhaps to recount them. And though all the boyish hopes and solitudes and pleasures are now mingled into one lengthened mass and as a vision to look back upon, yet they form a vision the substantial joys of which I never can forget and never can repeat—a vision which will always hold a prominent place in my memory and in my affections.

'I have long ago made up my mind that I have of late been enjoying what will in all probability be, as

far as my own individual case is concerned, the happiest years of my life. And they have fled! From these few facts do we not draw a train of reflection awfully important in their nature and extremely powerful in their impression on the mind.

‘This time to-morrow—I shall be no Etonian. It is high time to close this melancholy letter, and I remain with sincerest love to all . . .’

It took him from Monday midday until eight o'clock the following morning to travel by coach from Eton to Liverpool: ‘prodigiously quick’ travelling it was. He found the North astir with change. On the Mersey curious new boats whose tall tubes they called funnels were scudding to and fro enveloped in clouds of black smoke. Navvies in red waistcoats and battered top-hats were digging away at new canals, laying the girders of new bridges, and making cuttings to lay strips of iron, rails as they were called, ‘for the conveyance of goods by locomotive steam engine’. His father—he was Sir John Gladstone, M.P., now—was bustling from place to place, attending board meetings, poring over prospectuses, discussing the practicability of a hundred projects for the employment of steam—a new bridge at Runcorn, a railroad to Manchester; the old man was ‘as active in mind as ever’. • Until October 1828 Gladstone passed a pleasant holiday taking due note of this new world that leapt to life in the North. Staying at friends’ houses, looking at all the books and pictures that had taken on a new interest since he had been to Eton, swimming his Newfoundland dog in the pond at Seaforth, ‘devouring strawberries’, and telling his young friends what a very good place Eton had been, he killed the months one by one. When the early hoar-frost was silver on what was left of the Lancashire moorlands he set his face to the South and Oxford.

V

On the 10th October 1828 Gladstone came through the cornfields to the Oxford that was still the city of Prince Rupert and Archbishop Laud. Over Magdalen bridge the coaches came rolling: 'Tantivy', 'Defiance', 'Rival', and 'Regulator'—the merry music of their horns sounding as they swung along the High. 'Begone, dull care!' the metallic notes rang out, as ostlers ran out from the 'Mitre' to hold the heads of smoking leaders. But it required more than the sound of a coaching horn to waken the drowsy old city that lay sunk among its trees and spires. Privilege was the University and the University was Oxford. An occasional nobleman in tufted cap and gown would stroll across the centre of Carfax. A gentleman commoner or two might be seen outside the 'Greyhound', cheapening the price of a terrier for bear-baiting with a blackguardly fellow from St. Thomas's. A group of dandies from Christ Church (Gladstone's own college)—'with their double watch-chains, their elaborate waistcoats and their fashionable suits, they could not have been dressed for thirty pounds', Gladstone observed—strolled white-hatted to Jobbers for an ice. At the door of the 'Angel' Mr. Bishop, blue-coated, a gold eyeglass dangling at his shirt-front, his great mastiff at his side, bowed in his illustrious guests. And under the elms in the 'Greyhound' yard sat Mother Jeffs, the pie-woman, behind her stall of oranges and tarts.

But between such vanities and William Ewart Gladstone the spectre of Dr. Simeon had begun to obtrude. Gladstone was surprised to find 'young men at Christ Church who when they were not hunting made a point of promenading the High Street in breeches that they only wore for that purpose and in which they never sat down lest any creases should appear'. He found that the services in the Cathedral were 'scarcely performed

with common decency'. Portly fellows imbibing 'vasty deeps of port' behind their sported oaks were content that 'a steady but dry Anglican orthodoxy' should have sway. Such conduct would 'never convert a single person'. And Gladstone, fresh from the earnest North, found worse. He heard a certain Dr. Whately preach 'an anti-Sabbatical doctrine as mischievous as it is unsound'.

Also one Mr. Crowther preached a 'most painful discourse' which impelled Gladstone to sit down at once to expostulate with him in a letter which he delivered with his own hand on the character and doctrines of the sermon.

A Dr. Pusey was sometimes to be detected leaning to rationalism in the University pulpit itself. But there was comfort to be derived from the sound Low Church sincerity of Dr. Newman, and Gladstone often sat beneath 'so good a man'. On some Sundays he heard three sermons, each lasting an hour and forty minutes.

In the easygoing worldliness of Oxford the seed sown by Dr. Simeon and his satellites that had remained dormant at Eton sprang into life. 'In practice,' Gladstone noted in his diary, 'the great end is that the Love of God may become the habit of my soul, and particularly these things are to be sought: (1) The spirit of Love; (2) of Self-sacrifice; (3) of Purity; (4) of Energy.' The necessity for this last was apparent enough to one who found that 'prospectively I have the following work to do in the course of this term. (I mention it now that this may at least make me blush if I fail.) Butler's *Analogy*, analysis and synopsis. Herodotus, questions. St. Matthew and St. John. Mathematical lecture. *Aenid*. Juvenal and Persius. *Ethics*, five books. Prideaux (a part of, for Herodotus). Themistocles' *Greciae valedicturus* (I suppose a verse composition).'

If the Reverend Dr. Simeon's example was not forgotten neither was that of the Right Honourable George

Canning. In those days the Union debates were held in the hall behind Wyatt's picture-shop. And there in the February of 1830 Gladstone made his first important political speech. Before a full house, with all the virulence that animated those ministers who deported the six labourers of Dorsetshire for joining a trade union, he defended the Treason and Sedition Acts of 1795. Before an audience which regarded Liberty, to quote his own words, 'with jealousy and fear', he evoked tumultuous plaudits with his High Tory doctrines of coercion and repression. The tall, earnest, young speaker with dark, wavy hair and side-whiskers who spoke with a noticeable Lancashire accent became a well-known figure in those stormy debates. His ideas withstood like an immemorial rock the pleadings of the new humanitarianism that was beginning to well up in Balliol. When it was proposed to emancipate the slaves in the West India plantations, Gladstone of Christ Church led the Tory attack with an amendment that 'education of a religious kind was a more fit object of legislation', and carried it by a majority of three to one.

Talk of the kind went down well enough in Oxford. Town and Gown were true blue, and the county was a phalanx for the old order. But for the first time Oxford was not England. Out of the grimy northern skies that Gladstone knew so well came a note in the steady murmur which was something more than the swing of steam-engines. The patience of the new England was wearing very thin. It was 1831. In pleasant places, from tower and steeple, beneath St. George's Cross ancient bells rang in the New Year comfortingly. Away in the grey North from pit-head and factory-yard the sirens screeched threateningly. The spectre of Reform was stalking the floor of the old House of Commons.

Gladstone, who might have read the signs so easily, refused to read them at all. That April he attended a Reform meeting at Warwick. It failed to impress him.

Ministry has unwisely introduced and most unscrupulously forwarded a measure which threatens not only to change the form of Government but ultimately to break up the very foundations of Social Order as well as materially to forward the views of those who are pursuing this project throughout the civilized world'; and argued it with a fury of indictment. The Whigs were mouthing of the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill, whence this amazing consistency. On this they had compromised, that they had whittled down. 'If they cannot say the barilla duty, the whole barilla duty, and nothing but the barilla duty, how dare they thrust upon the people of England as if it were a chapter out of their infallible Whig Koran the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.'

Amid a storm of applause he sat down, flushed with self-satisfaction. 'England expects every man to do his duty, and ours, humble as it is, has been done.' 'We all of us felt an epoch in our lives had occurred', wrote a hearer. At the back of the hall a young man whose cap carried the nobleman's gold tassel rose to clap, a smile on his face. Lord Lincoln had come to hear the budding Tory champion of whom people talked so much. His father, the Duke of Newcastle, had a sheaf of loyal boroughs in his gift and was on the look-out for likely young men. The debate dragged on; it seemed suddenly to lack fire. The cause of Reform was lost beyond all hope. A few Balliol men pleaded and protested in vain. Amid the scraping of many chairs the House divided. For the motion with Mr. Gladstone's amendment 94; against 38. Loud and heartfelt cheers resounded all through the long room.

Gladstone had carried his amended motion by well over two to one; and (although he did not know it) was launched on his public career.

Oxford was still the home of lost causes. Within a year the first Reform Bill was through both Houses of

Parliament. The five hundred-year-old fabric of English Government was ruthlessly pulled down. Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds got their members at last, as did forty other towns. Fifty-six rotten boroughs vanished altogether. Leaseholders got the vote and every ten-pound householder in every town.

The reins of Government were torn from the hands of the landed oligarchy and put into those of the stolid middle class that was too stolid to see where things were leading.

VI

Fortified by a 'very able sermon indeed' from Dr. Newman, Gladstone left Oxford with a double first at the end of 1831. In the following February, while England was still working itself up to the climax of the First Reform Bill, he, with his brother John, took the Antwerp packet and started to tour the Continent. It was the twilight of the 'grand tour': that essentially aristocratic method of 'finishing' a young man's education by sending him over the well-beaten tracks of those portions of Europe which figured in the ancient history he learned at school. Young sprigs of the nobility accordingly trailed over the Apennines, kissed the hands of Tuscan duchesses, viewed with approval fluted columns and broken basilicas, and noticed the Alps with a shudder of disdain. They duly returned laden with motley collections of broken statuary and grimy canvases with which to clutter up their family seats; and with a proper contempt for all alien morals that was the fruit in most instances of a first-hand acquaintance. Across the cobbled streets of Flemish brick still splashed with the blood from the recent barricades the Gladstones passed into the France of Louis Philippe. At smoky cafés they heard men in blue shirts declaiming Liberal principles and read disturbing news from home in Galignani's *Messenger*. And now and then, in a corner, they came

upon a gnarled old *grogard* who prated of the Empire and longingly twisted his tongue round the names of Wagram and Rivoli. The travellers crossed the Alps over Napoleon's road and saw Lombardy basking peacefully in the care of Austrian whitecoats. No subversive principles here at least. In Tuscany they saw pictures and ate ices; and through the abject misery of the Papal States they followed the Via Emilia in the track of legions and pilgrims and Emperors, over the Milvian Bridge, and into the Piazza del Popolo, to Rome.

Threading the light and shadow of Bernini's monster colonnade where pigeons fluttered languorously and the fountains splashed as eternally as Time, Gladstone came into the immeasurable hush of St. Peter's. There, in the presence of the great symbols of Christendom, he discovered something new. It was as if until then he had been seeking spiritual peace along paths that had led only to the arid wastes of Protestant controversy. Befogged by the sermons of Dr. Simeon and all the other 'excellent specimens of the excellent Evangelical school', he had lost sight of ultimate unity in his efforts to perceive the niceties of conflicting dogma. Now, while Palestrina's music wafted on faint clouds of incense the words that in their divine arrogance have comforted so many weary generations: *Et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum* . . .

'I felt' (he wrote) 'the pain and shame of the schism which separates us from Rome . . . whose melancholy effects the mind is doomed to feel when you enter this magnificent temple and behold in its walls the images of Christian saints and the words of everlasting truth.'

Poor Dr. Simeon! Poor Reverend Mr. Jones! What growth in grace could this portend? Romance, beauty, the eternal mysteries, were already feeling their way to the heart of this evangelical son of a Liverpool merchant,

who still in the spirit had drawn sword for King Charles. The old aphorism had again fulfilled itself: the path from Rodney Street, the path from Eton, the path from Christ Church, all roads led to Rome.

VII

Back in Milan, he found a letter waiting. Lord Lincoln sent his greetings from the House to his young friend, and was pleased to be able to tell him that if he felt any inclination to enter public life such influences as his father, His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, could command in the family borough of Newark were at the disposal of Mr. William Gladstone. It was a most magnificent offer, a truly ducal gesture. To enter a Parliament so fraught with change, so rich in possibility, and to enter at twenty-three! 'Stunning, overpowering'; it left him the whole of the evening 'in a flutter of confusion'.

But removed from the seductions of St. Peter's the matter-of-fact evangelicism of Liverpool soon asserted itself. 'Decidedly more than permission from my dear father' would be necessary to authorize 'his entering on the consideration of particulars at all'. Had not the Duke of Newcastle declared Mr. Canning the most profligate Minister the country had ever had? 'It struck me to inquire of myself does the Duke know the feelings I happen to entertain towards Mr. Canning? Does he know, or can he have in mind, my father's connexion with Mr. Canning?' And then again the Duke had offered 'a handsome contribution' towards the expenses. Would not this tend to abridge the member's independence?

The questions loomed and receded as the young man paced the length of his bedroom in the hotel at Milan. Did the Duke know? Would the Duke demand assurances? Could an honourable man compromise? Yes,

Gladstone told himself at last, the Duke did know—or the Duke did not care. No, his brother reassured him, 'the Duke had neither asked for pledges in the past nor expected them in the future'. The way was clear then; the offer could be accepted. The offer was accepted.

Gladstone returned to England and spent the next weeks at Torquay in a thrill of anticipation. While awaiting the dissolution he issued his address to the electors, and between yachting and reading he received plenty of advice from his father and his friends as to the fit manner in which to fight an election. A fellow Etonian recommended him to go to Newark 'in a jacket, because a jacket created a jacket in the first instance, looks much better than one formed out of a dress-coat *rayée*, and you are of course aware that the Duke's nominees at Newark invariably leave their coat-tails in the hands of the friends of freedom of opinion'. In fact, not only the tails but the seat itself had been left in the hands of the enemy. Sometimes the most pliable of pocket boroughs 'went wrong', and the tide of Reform had actually carried Newark in the Whig interest. To win back the borough for his Tory patron Gladstone would have to make a fight of it.

Early on Sunday morning, 23rd February 1832, Sir John Gladstone came into his son's bedroom with news that Newark required him immediately. Gladstone jumped up, dressed, and ate a hurried breakfast. But the combined excitement and hurry left him no appetite. At a quarter to nine his father drove him off to Newton Abbot while the young man sat wondering whether it was right to travel on a Sunday. At Newton Abbot chaises were for hire, and Gladstone bade his father good-bye and set off for Exeter.

He had an hour to wait there for the London mail coach, and, as the propriety of Sunday travelling was still upon his conscience, he salved it somewhat by attending part of morning prayer at the cathedral.

At midday the mail came cantering in, and he took his seat. As they bowled along through the placid stillness of a west country Sunday, Gladstone fell into converse with a countryman who got in for a few miles. The countryman was a Tory, and there was common ground in a discussion on the ethics of Sunday travelling, 'which we agreed in disapproving'. The new friend was speeded with some tracts, though whether in favour of Sabbatarianism or against Reform he does not tell us.

At Yeovil the mail changed horses and the passengers went to dine, while Gladstone took the opportunity to read a little out of a five-year-old number of the *Christian Year*. Once more they set off and clattered through the midnight into Wiltshire, and Monday morning, greatly to the young candidate's peace of mind. At half-past six on a bleak, foggy morning, they pulled up cold and stiff at the 'White Horse' cellars in Piccadilly.

There was an hour and a half in which to cross London, wash and breakfast, and catch the 'Highflyer' to Newark. A huge red sun hovered above a London fog, but as they clattered into Hertfordshire the mist dispersed and the day was fine. Through Hatfield and Hitchin and Baldock and Stevenage the coach swung, and the passengers took tea at Stamford. At midnight they reached Newark.

Feeling in the borough was high. Out of its sixteen hundred electors a quarter were tenants of the Duke of Newcastle who had punished them for their lapse from duty by serving forty of them with summary notice to quit. But the tenants were men of spirit and paraded His Grace's notices around the town framed and borne aloft with contumely and a brass band. The issue was doubtful, and in Serjeant Wilde (who was yet destined for the Woolsack) Gladstone had a first-rate opponent.

The hustings were set up in a whirl of battered brains and broken crowns. The doors of the 'Clinton Arms' and the 'Saracen's Head' were thrown open at His

Grace's expense, and over two thousand pounds' worth of liquor, an allowance of well over a pound apiece, was purveyed to the free and independent electors. While their menfolk drained their mugs and huzzaed for the good old cause the women sipped dishes of tea in droves (likewise at His Grace's cost). They set to work, too, on a fair silken banner which they duly presented with demure blushes and well chosen words to the youthful champion. 'This is no trivial banner of a party club,' he said, 'this is the flag of England that I see before me. It is the symbol of our moderation and our power, beneath which, when every other throne crumbled to dust . . . mankind found sure refuge and triumphant hope. The blast that tore every other ensign to tatters served only to unfold our own and to display its beauty and its glory.'

The young man went his rounds with a brass band (fifteen shillings per man per day) canvassing for votes. He was out at eight in the morning and kept it up 'until nightfall—'with a great crowd, band and flags and innumerable glasses of beer and wine all jumbled together'.

He spoke in person to every freeholder he came across.

'As regarded shaking hands, my rule was, always to be *ready* to do it, and distinctly to seek it whenever anything favourable was said—to do it without this is, I think, overdoing it, for it would convey a suspicion of insincerity, except where it is done by way of saying good-bye, when I used to offer it immediately. I think a hand was refused me about eight times, out of perhaps four thousand.'

Forty of them would sit down to dine (His Grace footed the bill) in the evening at the 'Clinton Arms', singing and speechifying until the clock struck ten. And what with discussing the last day's canvass and



‘MEMBER FOR NEWARK, 1834’

From the Mezzotint by W. Bradley, engraved by Walker

planning the next and the rubber of whist with which Gladstone always eased his mind at the end of the day it was one in the morning before he got to bed.

The poll was opened and the voters trickled up the wooden steps and on to the hustings platform, where the poll-clerks at their respective tables noted the votes up in the books. The rival crowds cheered for each elector as he stepped down and the figures of their man displayed upon the hustings mounted one by one. On the second day the books were closed, and it was seen that William Ewart Gladstone, 'the twenty-three-year-old schoolboy', 'the slavery man', 'the Duke's man Friday', was at the top of the poll. To his 887 votes, Serjeant Wilde could only muster 726. It took him an hour and a half to explain all that away to the waiting crowd and, 'affected to tears himself, he affected others also'.

'I should rather incline to exaggerate than to extenuate', Gladstone shouted to the roaring crowd, 'such connexion as exists between me and the Duke of Newcastle. . . . I met the Duke of Newcastle upon the broad ground of public principle and upon that ground alone.' (So the qualms of Milan were now effectually at rest!) 'I owe no other bond of union with him than this: that he in his exalted sphere and I in my humble one entertain the same persuasion that the institutions of this country are to be defended against those who threaten their destruction at all hazards and to all extremities. . . . You admit that one possessing so large a property here and faithfully discharging the duties that that property entails' (Did the forty evicted tenants hear this?) 'ought in the natural force of things to exercise—a certain influence. You return me to Parliament not merely because I am the Duke of Newcastle's man but because the man the Duke has sent and the Duke himself are your men.'

The goggle-eyed and beery crowd duly hiccuped its

appreciation of the fact that the Duke of Newcastle had had something to do with it all, and went its way shouting lustily and looking forward to the next election. As a local scribbler had it:

‘This borough was led away by the bubble Reform to support those who by specious and showy qualification have dazzled their eyes, but delusion has vanished, shadows no longer satisfy, and Newark is restored to its high place in the esteem of the friends of Order and Good Government.’

INDIGO

INDIGO

I

AWAY behind the clipped yews in the gardens and as far as might be from the polite drawing-rooms of the English governing class were the privies and cesspools; away, hidden in remote corners of the Empire, was slavery.

‘As soon as you leave Georgetown,’ says the Prussian scientist Schomburgh who travelled Guiana in those days, ‘all paths run out to the plantations.’ Behind the dike which kept out the sea on the one side and kept in the waters of the Demerara River on the other, on flat green stretches of cotton and cane, toiled the creoles and negroes, whose sweat and ache were transmuted five thousands miles away into hounds and horses, libraries and grand tours. The Demerara plantations were a countryside to themselves—a countryside intersected by as many ditches, dikes, and canals as the fenlands of Lincolnshire. Along the slow waters heavy punts, piled high with the sugar-cane, slid monotonously to and fro. Along the dikes there were planted trees and flowering bushes, with vivid mauve and scarlet blossoms and leaves of rifle green. There were tamarinds and orange-trees and thickets of mimosa; swarms of humming birds darted in and out of the clustered blossoms, little birds with scarlet heads like cardinals, and little birds with white heads and black feathers like curates fluttered over the long grass. Flights of bright green parrots screeched into the deep sky and on every stump and bush and branch a gaunt carrion kite sat sniffing distant decay. They were the recognized scavengers of the plantation, these carrion kites, and to shoot them was forbidden with a fifty-dollar fine.

Set in this blinding riot of colours man led a cruelly

chequered life. Now childishly gay, now abysmally sorrowful as he was traded from master to master, the slave went about his labour to the steady crack of the overseer's whip. Polite England scarcely thought of him, or if it did was pleased to imagine him the joyous participant in a perpetual ballet. People never ceased to tell the negro how lucky he was. Admiral Barrington said that slaves appeared to him so happy that he often wished himself in their situation; Admiral Lord Rodney never knew the least cruelty inflicted upon them; Admiral Lord St. Vincent thought their home 'Paradise itself compared to their native country'; and even stout William Cobbett, the most radical Radical who ever rode the shires, was persuaded that these 'fat, lazy negroes laughed from morning to night'.

It may be that they did. But, if so, their sense of humour must have been macabre. At the whim of his master, a slave could be flogged up to fifteen lashes, and, with the formal sanction of a magistrate, the number could be increased to thirty-nine. A French traveller to Berbice in 1831 was sickened to watch a woman receiving the lash for refusing to work the treadmill. 'The whip fell with the regularity of a metronome on the bare body of the wretched creature with a clear and resounding ring which could not drown her shrieks thirty yards away. At intervals, the woman fell senseless and was rolled in a woollen blanket until, having somewhat recovered her strength, she was brought back to the executioner.'

If the use of the lash was restricted, the extent of a slave's confinement was not. There was no limit to the master's right to imprison his slaves in his cellar, and in the damp heat of Guiana every cellar was infested with rats, tarantulas, centipedes, scorpions, bats, mosquitoes, and ants.

To save the colonial conscience of England, it had been laid down that the life of a slave was sacrosanct

and that in the eyes of the King's judges all men were equal. But in practice planter magistrates and planter jurymen were never known to find against one of their own kind. A woodcutter was accused of tying an old negro to a tree and leaving him to starve there. Negro witnesses deposed to the fact that 'the worms of death had begun to devour their miserable victim before the life was out of his body'; but the court found it convenient to acquit the white man for 'lack of proof'.

Worst of all, from the state of slavery there was no escape: any generous tendency on the part of a slave-owner was checked by a heavy fine on manumission; and the child of a slave was born a slave. It was a thing that fitted into the system of Georgian England like a cog-wheel in one of Mr. Arkwright's new machines. Seemingly, the system would endure; and so long as the system endured the cog would continue dutifully to revolve in its appointed place. But in the shadow of the new machines that were pulsating in the raw factory cities, whispers were passing from man to man—whispers that swelled to a mighty question. Cog-wheel by cog-wheel, the new century was scrutinizing it. Mechanic hands were itching for an overhaul.

So in the places where the stifled voice of the new England was beginning to make itself heard—in stuffy shop parlours, in debating clubs, in mechanics' institutes, in ugly little bethels—slavery was questioned. At crowded meetings in dissenting conventicles and corn exchanges old bodies in poke bonnets were moved to tears by the eloquence of professional 'slaves' with woolly heads and scarlet waistcoats. As the silver sixpences rattled into the collecting-boxes, the monster petition passed from hand to hand. Until from end to end of England the voice of Methodism and the new-found expression of the artisans cried out in unison that this unchristian state of things must cease.

Still, between the plantations of Demerara and the

back streets of Lancashire stretched many leagues of Atlantic water and the yet wider gulf that separated the world of privilege and profit from the world of the evangelical idealist and the self-educated labouring man. It might have seemed impossible that any effective pressure could be brought by anti-slavery upon the hard-drinking planters. But the little collections taken in back parlours did more than 'pay the expenses of the meeting'. They provided the steerage passages of earnest young men willing to preach the Word of God and minister to their black brethren in their need. Methodist missionaries gradually filtered in to the plantations, set up their meeting-houses, and conveyed to their congregations something of the abolitionist feeling that was rising in England. Their path was hard. They were 'odious to every respectable person', their conventicles were pulled down, and their houses were fired by gangs of drunken whites. They were harried from place to place and hunted from plantation to plantation. The Established Church looked on approving. The Colonial Church Union was responsible for the mob that destroyed twenty chapels, since 'to get rid of the rooks you must destroy the nests'. For no vested interest in slavery seemed able to understand that it was unchristian. And the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel itself held slaves in Barbados and used the whip against them six years after the British Parliament had recommended its abolition.

II

It was early July and the summer half at Eton in 1823. On Agar's Plough in the long June evenings the boys were playing cricket. From the river-bank could be heard the faint plop of oars and the splash of bathers. The conscious assurance of the old unchanging order brooded over the great grey Keep of Windsor and the fat pastures of Buckinghamshire.

Young William Gladstone had just got his remove into Fifth Form. The promotion carried its especial privilege. Henceforward he was released from fagging and the slavery through which the Lower School boy toiled for his betters was at an end. He was now a 'slave-owner' himself: fags ran to and fro at his bidding.

Away, far beyond the Western sea, in those same days, a more lasting servitude heard too a faint foreboding sound. For the sullen voice of the anti-slavery agitation had at last penetrated to the candle-lit chamber at St. Stephen's. And so General Murray, the Governor of Demerara, learnt in those July days that the British Parliament had resolved upon 'an absolute prohibition to inflict the punishment of flogging, under any circumstances, on female slaves'. The Colonial Secretary further expressed himself confident that the driving system was 'repugnant to the feelings of every individual in this country' and 'could not too strongly recommend that the whip should be abolished both as an emblem of the driver's authority and as the instrument of his displeasure'.

Murray was himself a planter. His advisory Court of Policy was composed of planters. His position was delicate. To ignore the resolutions would mean trouble in London; to comply with them would mean trouble in Georgetown. Not knowing what to do, Murray did nothing, and the Court of Policy was so politic as to adjourn consideration of the matter *sine die*.

But the slave populations round Georgetown grew restive. These sultry July days too were full of strange whisperings. At Leresouvenir, one of the biggest plantations in the neighbourhood, the bailiffs were in possession and a large slave population was on the eve of a sale by auction. Under the hammer fathers and children, wives and husbands would be separated for ever. Then some one began saying that the King had decreed their freedom and that the parchment of their

liberties lay on the Governor's table; that he was holding it back, that the Court of Policy was plotting to trick it away from them.

The 17th of August was a Sunday. A heterogeneous and many-hued congregation of slaves streamed out from their hovels in the morning to attend service at Dr. John Smith's Free Church Chapel on the estate. Word had gone round that the preacher would give a sign, and it was for a sign that all were waiting. The overseer rode ahead, for General Murray had laid it down that 'negroes attending Divine Service should be attended by some white person, so as to enable the planter to judge of the doctrine held forth to his slaves'. The slaves trotted off alongside the overseer's mule 'in all manner of dresses', running to keep up with him and 'as many of the young and lazy ones as could lay hold of the mule's tail' were dragged along in that manner.

All out of breath they settled in the pews. Then, after the usual hymns and prayers, John Smith began his sermon: 'If thou hadst known even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace—but now they are hid from thine eyes.' John Smith was a lifelong opponent of slavery and a personal enemy of General Murray. When the London Missionary Society had sent him out to Demerara in 1817 the Governor told him that he would be expelled if he taught the negroes how to read. He had noted in his diary: 'O that this colony should be governed by a man who sets his face against the moral and religious improvement of the negro slaves!'

At the words of the text the slaves listened wide-eyed. From the frail, consumptive figure in the pulpit came words purposely vague but with an immediate meaning to men and women unsettled by the wild rumours that were afloat and waiting for guidance and a sign.

And in that congregation sat a slave named after

the master of his estate, Quamina Gladstone, and his son, Jack Gladstone.

The estate was not inappropriately named 'Success'. It had lately been bought by old John Gladstone, who had changed it over from coffee to sugar. Even in Demerara it was a byword for the conditions of its slaves. 'The negroes of Success', John Smith had noted in his diary, 'complained to me of excessive labour and very severe treatment.' And he had rebuked the overseers himself for working their subjects to death.

That night, with an eloquence worthy of the master far away in Liverpool he had never set eyes on, Jack Gladstone preached to his fellow-slaves. The words he had heard that morning in the chapel ran in his head like fire. His audience caught his infection. 'At the word of Jack Gladstone and the other brethren of Bethel Chapel' the slaves rose on forty different estates. News travelled mysteriously. Slaves seemed to know what their fellows were doing miles away. At the blood-curdling shriek of a conch shell dusky forms came swarming out of their compounds to merge like quicksilver into a swaying crowd. They poured off to the white men's houses and by the light of torches locked their masters in those dank and crawling cellars or dragged them with noisy mockery to the stocks set up for themselves to pass the night there helpless amid the loud hum of savage mosquitoes smothered in the damp closeness of the tropic night. All night the sound of breaking glass and rending timber announced to white women shuddering behind locked doors that the slaves were risen. You could hear the sullen roar of the crowd from Georgetown, and from the windows of Government House Brigadier-General Murray saw a foreboding redness in the sky. Then came the ring of bells, the blare of bugles. The men of the militia companies came puffing up in their tight red jackets and white duck trousers. General Murray with his staff rode straight

out to the heart of the rioting, to the confines of the estate of 'Success'. Though a slave-owner, he was not a bad one. His own slaves used to say, 'When our master comes we are content and happy, he laughs and talks with us', and he was anxious to do his duty, though he did not like it.

But the Gladstone slaves were neither content nor happy when he came to talk with them that night. At one of the bridges over the oily canals he met over forty of them in their cotton trousers, waving cane knives and shouting out for 'unconditional emancipation'.

He tried hard to reason with them.

'If you persist in this sort of thing I shall never be able to abolish the floggings of your women or stop the overseers going about with whips', he said.

'That is no comfort to us', some one shouted. And then, in language which they had learnt at John Smith's chapel, they cried: 'God made us flesh and blood, same as the white men.' 'We are tired of being slaves.' 'King George has set us free.'

The words rang out in the darkness over the plantations. Somewhere nearby a conch shell sounded. More and more slaves were coming up to swell the group that confronted the Governor. His officers tried to pull him away, but he shook himself free and continued to argue. For half an hour His Britannic Majesty's Governor-General reasoned with Mr. Gladstone's slaves, who would hear no reason. Then, at last, he gave it up and turned his horse's head towards Georgetown.

By the morning, thirteen thousand slaves were in revolt. Jack Gladstone had good control over his men and the Christian precepts of their preachers were not quite forgotten. There was no stealing, and only two of the hated overseers were killed—and that after they had fired on the negroes.

General Murray proclaimed, in his own words, 'All the horrors of martial law', called out the few

regulars in the colony, and mobilized the white militia. Systematically the rebellion was put down. Murray had impressed upon his officers the necessity of avoiding blood as far as possible, but the planter officers were less patient than their planter general. One rifleman, it is true, was wounded; but over one hundred slaves were killed before the rebellion was within bounds.

Drum-head courts martial for the ringleaders followed immediately. Within a month forty-seven black corpses swung among the dark-leaved tamarinds. Poor Quamina, although he had saved the life of Mr. Gladstone's manager, was shot in the bush and his body hanged in chains between two cabbage-trees in front of 'Success'. As late as the following winter two of Mr. Gladstone's slaves were sentenced to 'a thousand lashes and to be worked in chains for life'.

But the last act of the sorry tragedy still remained to be played out—John Smith was arrested, flung into a cellar, and after two months was dragged half dead before a Court of British Officers. The charge was one of conspiring to foment rebellion. In this outpost of Empire far from Westminster Hall and the King's writs the rules of evidence and the elementary laws of justice were ignored. Jack Gladstone was induced to save his life by perjury; hearsay evidence was admitted; the indignant protests of the Church of England chaplain were unheeded. Smith was condemned to die. With true military humour, knowing that the condemned man's doctor had foretold his death if he were kept in his cellar, they sent him back there, and at the same time recommended him to mercy. He died long before any answer came from England. And Murray pursued his hatred beyond death itself. Mrs. Smith was forbidden to attend the funeral. And when some of Mr. Gladstone's slaves tried to build a monument it was razed to the ground.

III

John Gladstone was seriously upset when the news from Demerara reached him. He at once sent all the papers to his friend Huskisson, who was in the Ministry, as a commentary on the 'Fatal Effects of Missionary Endeavour and Humane Legislation'. Slavery was property; and property, as every one who had read an election address knew, was the basis of civilization.

Mr. Huskisson thought so too. 'I perfectly agree with you that, in a matter of this portentous difficulty, it is only by gradual amelioration—by moral and religious improvement—by humanity and kindness—by imperceptibly creating better domestic habits and feelings among the slaves—by countenancing and encouraging all that can have that tendency in the conduct of the owners and white people—by repressing with the strong arm of the law, and stigmatizing with the moral power of opprobrium and disgrace, whatever leads to an opposite result, that we have a chance of ultimately, and even then remotely, providing for the termination of so great an evil, moral and political, as the existence of a large population in a state of chattel possession and personal slavery. In principle, this is the end which every good man ought to wish for, perhaps to look to; but it is an end, which, so far from publishing or proclaiming at the outset, he ought almost to conceal even from himself. . . . I think the example of Smith, of whom it is difficult to presume he was altogether innocent of the late conspiracy, proves that the colonies and the Government must look for the religious instruction of the negroes to men whose situation and tenure will afford a better security that they will not overstep the views and intentions of their employers, than can be found in the voluntary zeal, even if always honest and sincere, of the missionaries, for the interests of religion. . . . I am sorry that the vicinity of Smith to your estate, and his

connexion with some of your slaves, has involved you in some loss of property; but, looking to the immense stake you have in this colony, you may console yourself if the result of this formidable conspiracy should be, that its premature explosion affords the chance of a better insurance against the repetition of a similar danger.'

Fortified with this indication of official support John Gladstone began a campaign to save his property. For things were looking uncomfortable, and indignation meetings were packed out. Anti-slavery petitions could not be drafted quickly enough. Governors, officers, planters were denounced. A Royal Duke took the chair at Freemasons Tavern in London, where a young barrister named Macaulay moved thousands to a frenzy of enthusiasm. 'In those wretched islands,' he cried, 'we see a Press more hostile to Truth than any censor; juries more insensible to justice than any Star Chamber . . . the court martial sat without a jurisdiction, it convicted without evidence, it condemned to a punishment not warranted by law.' And behind it all, confident in the justice of his mission, there lobbied, there dinied, there wrote, there subscribed: John Wilberforce.

Back in Liverpool the compositors of the *Courier* were constantly setting up long and ponderous letters signed 'Mercator' that came to them in John Gladstone's hand from number 62 Rodney Street. He enlarged upon the 'extreme danger' of abolishing the whip; he trusted that that 'well-meaning but mistaken man Mr. Wilberforce' would perceive the grave responsibility his abolitionists had incurred; and though he had not 'any intention of advocating slavery', he could not but point out with pain that 'the ringleaders almost wholly belonged to the estates most distinguished for kind and indulgent treatment'. Lastly, he would have 'the negroes to receive the benefits of religious instruction . . . from pure sources . . . clergymen of the Established Churches and not the Missionary Societies'.

But a force was beginning to move across the land which Mr. Huskisson could no more arrest than he could stop the steam-engine that ran over him six years after. The tale of John Smith the Demerara martyr was told and retold a thousand times around the hearths where men still scanned the lives of those other martyrs whom Foxe immortalized. And on 1st June 1824 before the High Court of Parliament, Brougham accepted the brief for the deceased which the opinion of thousands had thrust into his hands. Better than any man in England he could put into words the genuine and generous emotions of a people, whether it were for a murdered missionary or an outraged queen.

That night at St. Stephen's was not to be easily forgotten. It was the last great appearance of William Wilberforce; the first of Thomas Babington Macaulay. Before the eyes of John Gladstone, sitting indignantly upright on a Tory back-bench, the panorama unrolled. Out of the happenings on his own, his Gladstone lands, out of the sufferings inflicted on the body of Jack Gladstone his slave, there sprang the Liberal whirlwind which his son was to ride for half a century and more. And when 'Who goes home?' was called in the corridors that night the old colonial system stood tottering over John Smith's grave. In the cause of the slaves John Smith's body (like John Brown's years after) lay a-mouldering in the grave: his soul went marching on.

IV

For the next ten years the indigo shadow of slavery was to cloud William Gladstone's life. Whilst still at Eton he felt moved to write as a 'Friend to Fair Dealing' various ponderous letters to the *Liverpool Courier* defending the attitude his father took up. Slavery in the abstract he admitted to be indefensible; but he attacked what he conceived to be the credulous, ill-balanced,

and sentimental thinking which clustered round the name of Wilberforce. The negro, he thought, was happier if he was made to work. The welfare of the colonies was fundamentally bound up with negro labour. Arguments of climate and of history at least as old as Aristotle, fortified the sincerity of the young Etonian. And it was always open to him to point out (as he did) that many of those Whigs who thundered most vigorously against plantation slaves themselves thrive upon the unearned increment of factory slaves whose condition in Lancashire was every whit as miserable as that of the most wretched negro in all the Indies.

At Eton questions of the day were not debated. Nothing more recent than 'Whether the Peerage Bill of 1719 was calculated to be beneficial or not?' occupied the nursery of England's statesmen. But Oxford was more outspoken; and in the long room of the Union Society William Gladstone flung all the fervour of his being into a vindication of the system of slavery as it stood. He had not opposed the Reform Bill or the Removal of Jewish Disabilities with half such conviction and such fire. It was as President of the Union and in his last year that he moved an amendment to a motion in favour of Emancipation: 'That legislative enactments ought to be made (1) for better guarding the personal and civil rights of the negroes in our West Indian colonies; (2) for establishing compulsory manumission; (3) for securing universally the receiving of a Christian education, a measure of which total but *gradual* emancipation will be the natural consequence', arguing that long education and experience must go before liberty.

In 1838 he stood for Parliament. He was severely heckled upon the Newark hustings, for the Whigs were aware how much of his father's wealth depended upon the family plantations. One elector asked the candidate's views on the passage out of Exodus: 'He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand,

he shall surely be put to death.' Another wanted his opinion on slavery 'categorically stated'. The candidate compromised. He desired the emancipation of slaves upon such terms as would preserve them and the colonies from destruction. The slaves ought first to be fully prepared for emancipation.

The public conscience demanded more than words. Slavery was the last thing Gladstone heard before he entered the House; it was the first to meet him after. The Radical news-sheet *Reflector* wrote of him: 'Mr. Gladstone is the son of a person who amassed a fortune by West India dealings . . . a great part of his gold has sprung from the blood of black slaves. . . .' He entered the House knowing that he had a hard battle before him. Reform had done its work and the Whig majority were in fighting mood. They opened fire by proposing to remove the Disabilities on Jews (in face of violent opposition from Sir Oswald Mosley); they proceeded with a frontal attack on slavery in general and the Gladstone estates in particular. On 21st February 1833 Lord Howick (afterwards Lord Grey) referred to 'an estate in Demerara' where great destruction of human life was directly attributable to the way in which the slaves were worked.

Gladstone sprang to the defence.

'I am ready to admit that the cultivation of sugar is of a more severe character than others. But I would ask: Are there not certain employments in this country more destructive to life than others? I would instance only painting and working in lead-mines. The noble lord has attempted to impugn the gentleman acting as manager of my father's estates, and in making this selection he has certainly been most unfortunate. There is not an individual in the colony more proverbial for humanity and the kind treatment of his slaves than Mr. Maclean . . . cases of cruelty have often been brought forward against the colonists and I confess, sir—

with shame and pain I confess—that cases of wanton cruelty have existed as well as they always will exist, and unquestionably this is a substantial reason why the British Legislature and public should set themselves in earnest to provide for its extinction. I admit that as regards our colonies we have not fulfilled those Christian obligations imposed on us by the dispensations of Providence to communicate wherever our commerce gives us access in return for the earthly goods which it brings to our shores the inestimable benefits of our religion . . . but should the emancipation of the slaves proceed according to any other law than in an exact harmony with their advancing character it must be ruinous to the colonies, to this country, and to the slaves themselves. . . . I would not redeem the slave from the hands even of an oppressor and an enemy to place him in a state where he would be his own worst enemy. . . . I do not admit that holding a slave necessarily involves sin, though it does involve the deepest and heaviest responsibility. . . .’

He thundered on, while the heavy-wigged Speaker drowsed in the heat of early June. For fifty minutes the young member spoke, then, flushed and yet relieved, he adjourned to the Carlton Club for a cup of tea. It had been a long maiden speech. Verbose, perhaps, even for the ponderous taste of the 1830’s, it might be charged with the arrogance of successful youth, but there was good sense in it. Those inconveniently well-reasoned arguments of the head which in all ages and at all times the impetuous emotions of the heart find so hard to answer had found a mighty spokesman.

Young Gladstone’s ability was as much admired as his sincerity was respected. ‘The rising hope of stern and unbending Tories’, Macaulay called him.

‘I found’, writes George Keppel (who was to be the last Waterloo veteran and then sat for East Norfolk as a Whig), ‘a beardless youth with whose appearance and

manner I was greatly struck . . . an earnest, intelligent countenance, large expressive black eyes. Who is he?’

‘He is the member for Newark, a young fellow who will some day make a great figure.’

‘Very able, eloquent, and impressive’, admitted Thomas Fowell Buxton, the Radical and abolitionist member for Weymouth.

And even the Colonial Secretary himself—Stanley—commented, ‘I never listened with greater pleasure to any speech. He argued with a temper, an ability, and a fairness which may well be cited as a good model . . . whatever cause shall have the good fortune of his advocacy will derive great support.’

Reaction had indeed sprung a mine; in an age when intelligence and humanity were so much the monopoly of Reform that the fourth George could never seriously believe that a man so clever as Chateaubriand could be genuinely a Royalist.

At one in the morning, the debate over, Gladstone issued from the House with that ‘copious dark stream’ of members, as he called it, which nightly footed its way up Parliament Street, Whitehall, and to Charing Cross. Walking back to his chambers in Albany, where he could at least wash his hands (a facility which the old House of Commons denied), he ‘found it most difficult to believe that such a poor and insignificant creature as I could really belong to, really form part of, an assembly which I felt to be so august’.

Yet he was fairly launched on an existence that was truly Augustan. London was taken with this ‘fine-looking man’ with ‘clear, quick eyes’ and a ‘mild and pleasant countenance’. Serious youth noted his hard work, his learning, his ‘highly intellectual expression’. Frivolous youth envied his ‘fine head of jet-black hair’, noting how it was ‘carefully parted from crown to brow, where it is tastefully shaded’. He went riding in the Row; he sat at the dinner-tables of condescending hosts; at

tea-time he balanced Rockingham saucers in the drawing-rooms of gracious hostesses. Frequently he obliged some great lady by singing for her guests. But on Sundays he would not dine out, not even to please Sir Robert Peel.

Fellow-members at the Carlton Club and the Oxford and Cambridge nodded in the most friendly way to the rising young Tory who was at once so able, so charming, and in all things so correct. Occasionally, in hall at Lincoln's Inn he met a contemporary who contradicted him with inconvenient quotations out of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham. He listened politely but unconvinced; he was quite sure that the Conservative forces, by their numbers, their wealth, and their respectability held the means of permanent power.

Unmoved he went back to Westminster to work and vote against admitting Jews to Parliament and Non-conformists to the Universities; against the ballot and the property tax; and in favour of the Corn Laws and flogging in the Army.

But the hosts of Midian were persistent. Lord Howick called for papers on the conduct of the Gladstone estates. William Gladstone countered by demanding similar returns from neighbouring estates.

Then the Government moved to emancipate all slaves after a preliminary seven years of 'apprenticeship'. Here at last was the straight issue, reached in spite of all the lobbying and manoeuvring of John Gladstone and the slave-owners. And now his son William clearly saw that the battle was lost.

'I spoke a few sentences', he said, 'in much confusion, for I could not easily recover from the sensation. It has been my study and desire, I know not with what degree of success, to cast to the winds all ancient feelings and opinions and singly to consider this question with a view to settlement. . . .'

He spoke no more. In August 1833 the Emancipation Bill became law.

V

Slavery was property; to diminish property without due and fair compensation was to strike at the foundations of civilized society. On this, Abolitionist and Planter, Whig and Tory, were fundamentally at one. The only point at issue was how many pounds sterling were equivalent to a pound of flesh. West Indian estates were mortgaged to capacity. A planter even without seeing his plantations could understand that if he had to pay for his labour in future he would be ruined. His only hope of salvation lay in persuading the British Parliament to endow his wage fund in the form of compensation.

Gladstone argued with great ingenuity on his behalf that however wrong slavery might be the planters ought not to bear the whole responsibility. For at least three hundred years the nation had not only countenanced but positively encouraged the system. If the system was to be eradicated, then the nation should bear its share of the cost.

The planters asked £45 million compensation. But there was a Whig majority at last, and the Government was obdurate. £15 million in the form of a loan was the best it would do. The nation was overwhelmingly behind the Government, but the nation was still not the electorate. Monster meetings of indignant abolitionists had resolved again and again that the people should not be bled for blood-money; but few among these audiences had the vote. And many a man who sat upon the Whig benches had promised his voters to give the planters fair play.

When at last the financial clauses were settled the House thought that the country was cheaply out of the matter in giving £20 million compensation to the slave-owners.

The House of Gladstone certainly did not do so badly

at the hands of the Commissioners of Compensation. For whereas His Grace the Bishop of Exeter got £11,000 for 665 slaves, John Gladstone got £44,717 for 844 slaves on two estates in Guiana. And three other members of the family got £9,225 for 168 slaves in Jamaica.

On Friday, 1st August 1834, Freedom rose with the sun upon the West India plantations. But black and white had been celebrating its coming all through the previous night. 'In some of the chapels the noble spectacle was seen of the masters attending with their negroes, and when the clock had struck, shaking hands with them and wishing them joy.' Next day churches and chapels were thronged from eleven in the morning until eight at night, and throughout the islands and on the mainland too the plaintive negro voices were thanking their Creator in harmony. At least one police superintendent reported that 'there had never been such universal and unbiased holiness'.

In Guiana, where the freed slaves selected their own special constables to maintain order, the Governor declared, 'It would be difficult in the best-informed countries of Europe to find stronger respect and obedience to the laws than are here afforded by the untaught and uneducated labourers so lately released from slavery . . . no part of the King's dominions are more law-abiding or more tranquil.'

Saturday was given over to merry-making, for which the negroes had provided themselves out of their own means with 'new apparel from top to toe and enough of food fare for every purpose'; and many masters roasted oxen and distributed free rum and salt fish.

VI

So Freedom came; but it was not full freedom yet. The negro must labour seven years for his liberty as

Jacob had laboured seven years for his Leah. And to many those years of apprenticeship were worse than the old slavery.

According to the '*Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British colonies; for promoting the Industry of the manumitted slaves; and for compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Services of such Slaves*' (3 & 4 Will. IV. c. 73):

'From and after the First day of August One thousand eight hundred and thirty-four all Persons who . . . shall . . . have been duly registered as slaves . . . shall . . . become and be apprenticed Labourers. . . .'

'II. During the continuance of the apprenticeship . . . such Person or Persons shall be entitled to the services of such apprenticed Labourer as would for the time being have been entitled to his or her services as a slave if this Act had not been made.

'V. . . . no Person who . . . shall become an apprenticed Labourer . . . shall . . . perform any Labour in the service of his or her Employer or Employers for more than forty-five hours in the whole or in any one week.

'XI. . . . during the continuance of any such Apprenticeship . . . the Person or Persons . . . entitled to the services of every such apprenticed Labourer . . . are required to supply him or her with such Food, Clothing, Lodging, Medicine, Medical Attention and such other Maintenance and Allowances as by any Law now in force in the Colony . . . an Owner is required to supply . . . and . . . to provide such . . . apprenticed Labourer with ground adequate, both in quantity and quality, for his or her support . . . and to allow to such . . . apprenticed Labourer from and out of . . . the . . . time during which he or she may be required to labour . . . such a portion of time as shall be adequate for the proper

cultivation of such ground and for the raising and securing the crops thereon grown. . . .

‘XVII. It shall not be lawful . . . to punish any such apprenticed Labourer for any offence . . . by the whipping, beating, or imprisonment of his or her person . . . or by any addition to the hours of labour . . . nor . . . to punish . . . a Female . . . by whipping or beating her Person . . .

‘XXI. . . . Neither . . . shall any apprenticed Labourer be compelled . . . to labour on Sundays . . . nor shall any apprenticed Labourer be . . . hindered from attending anywhere on Sundays for Religious Worship at his or her free Will or Pleasure but shall be at full liberty so to do without any Let, Denial or Interruption whatsoever.’

But abuses crept in quickly. Not all the planters were ready to work the apprenticeship system in the spirit in which it was intended. In some places they would ‘crib the negro’s time’ by giving him his weekly nine hours off in short intervals spread over the week instead of all together, at a stretch, from sunrise to sundown on a single day. Others took counsel’s opinion from Mr. Batty, the colonial expert, who advised that the apprentices were not in law entitled to the old allowances customarily received by the slaves. Then the perquisites of salt fish, rum, and sugar were cut off; old folk were deprived of their jobs as nurses, carriers, and cooks to the working gangs; and women with large families were no longer exempted from field-work.

But at home the reaction against slavery was at a pitch of triumphant energy. Meetings were redoubled as the missionaries reported each new evasion of the Act. ‘The Ladies Negro Friend’ and kindred societies bombarded good Queen Adelaide with petitions. A Mr. Joseph Sturge, back from the Indies, toured the

country with a redeemed Jamaica apprentice in tow. And at Exeter Hall His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex presided when it was determined to call a national anti-slavery convention in London.

One by one, the colonial legislatures terrified lest a Parliament still more hostile should be returned abandoned the period of apprenticeship. And by 1839 it was as dead as slavery itself.

VII

And William Gladstone?

'Wrote some lines and prose also . . . thought for some hours on my own future destiny and took a solitary walk to and about Kensington Gardens. . . .

'Read *L'Allemagne, Rape of the Lock* . . . half *The Bride of Lammermoor* . . . Goethe (and translated a few lines) . . . Scott's chapters on *Mary Stuart*, to enable me better to appreciate the admirable judgment of Schiller. . . . Attended Mr. Wilberforce's funeral. It brought solemn thoughts, particularly about the slaves. This is a burdensome question.'

Never was he more consistent or sincere than in his battle for the planters. Sentiment might take him as far as Mr. Wilberforce's funeral, emotion might stir a solitary walk round Kensington Gardens, but he would not suffer either sentiment or emotion to cloud the clear judgment which he reached after so much mental stress. He was always a realist. In the attack on the planters he saw an attempt to plunder a section of the community in the name of humanity. And he had been the first to point out that there were other sections nearer home that were just as vulnerable. If there was one fear in respectable society in the last years of King William the Fourth greater than the fear that

the cholera might break out it was that 'the mob' might break loose. There had been riots on and off since the century began. Only a year before Queen's Square, Bristol, had been sacked and gutted. Kingsley could write of those days that young lads were brought up to think, and not so wrongly, they they would soon have to fight for their property and their sisters' honour.

Gladstone saw clearly that if the planters were expropriated an ugly precedent would have been created, a precedent from which English Socialists shrink even a hundred years later. He did not shirk change. But unlike the wilder Reformers and Humanitarians, he believed that peoples should not advance until the way ahead was well prepared. He did not know that a hundred years later the failure to respect his theory would shipwreck half the democracies of Europe. But he did know that forty years before—in 1791—a National Assembly, every whit as well-meaning as the one in which he sat, had, without any preparation at all, decreed the abolition of slavery in the French island of San Domingo. Civil war, massacre, rape, plunder, disease, famine, and complete ruin had followed swiftly. The island had not recovered by 1834 (nor by 1934 for that matter). He was in his twenties, a conservative of Conservatives; he was to live almost to his nineties, a radical of the Radicals. Outwardly he was to change in almost everything; but in one thing he was not to change: in his faculty of looking ahead. Neither mob nor monarch could stampede him. He must take his time, he must think, he must consider. The heart must always surrender to the head.

VIOLET

VIOLET

I

THE Age of the 1830's broke upon England like a new continent upon the eyes of a weary traveller. The long winter of discontent was yielding to the springtide of Reform. Reaction's numb fist which had gripped an entire generation frightened by the red Jacobin bogey was being forcibly unclenched.

True the Palladian façade of the old order still stood. The King of England ruled over Hanover; poachers were hanged in chains; seamen were forcibly enlisted by the cudgels of the Press Gang; and fire was struck from flint and steel. In the dirty little chamber at St. Stephen's, where Charles I had come for the six members, young Gladstone sat beside men who had quailed before the ugly face of Wilkes, voted Lord North's appropriations to put down the American Rebellion, and applauded Pitt's subsidies to defeat the Corsican ogre.

But the spring wind of Liberty had blown half-way round the world. It had blown new nations into being from the ancient Republic below the Acropolis to the new Republics beneath the Andes. The Reform Bill of 1832 had set the House of Commons looking to the People and not to the Peerage for favour. Steam carriages were travelling at twenty miles an hour on rails and London Bridge was falling down; up in Lancashire a young cotton-spinner named Bright dreamed of a world free from customs houses. And in the cabin of H.M.S. *Beagle* a youth named Darwin was sorting specimens for a work on Natural Selection.

Since the Restoration there had been one rock against which the winds of innovation and change had beaten in vain. That rock of ages was the Church of England.

The Church's one foundation was its monopoly of every good post in the land. Without taking its communion no man could hold any office of profit under the Crown. Diplomacy, the Army, the Navy, the Civil Service, all the shoal of small Crown sinecures and perquisites were for none beyond that blest communion. Parliament was its preserve. Offices on or under the multitudinous corporations, councils, wards, and vestries were its traditional perquisites. Every magistrate on the bench must be its communicant. Its monopoly of both Universities was as old as the days of James II.

Out of the Universities flowed the stream of ordinands to be appointed curates, vicars, rectors, archdeacons, prebends, deans, bishops, and archbishops. Bewigged, banded, and gowned they came. Generation after generation went its way and no one noticed the difference. The Church dozed on, sleek, well-fed, comfortable. To impress a patron and subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles was all that was needed to acquire a fat living. There might be drawbacks of course. The rectory might be old-fashioned or too small; the hunting might be bad. But good port could be had anywhere. There were parishes where the incumbent never set foot, where his duty was limited to the dispatch of a curate and the receipt of an endowment. But throughout the English counties his tithe-barns took their tribute of barley sheaves, cider apples, sucking pigs, and all the fruits of the earth in due season.

In return for these manifold blessings which the State assured it, the Church shepherded its flock along the path of submission and content.

Though I am but poor and mean,
I will move the rich to love me,
If I'm modest, neat and clean,
And submit when they reprove me.

The Established Order had no better bulwark than the Established Church. And none worked more

sedulously by thought and word and deed than did the Tory parson for the Tory Party.

Unfortunately, the Tory Party could not for ever go on working for the Tory parson. For the wind that blew Byron to the East and Bolivar to the West was blowing the Whigs to Westminster. These Whigs drew their votes from precisely those quarters which suffered most acutely from the monopoly on which the Church of England flourished. Their members were returned pledged to redress the grievances of their friends, and for once an election pledge was fulfilled.

Early in 1828 Lord John Russell introduced a Bill to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts. The Test Act, which was as old as Charles II, compelled all men taking public office to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the Church of England and to subscribe to a declaration against transubstantiation within three months of their appointment. The Corporation Act imposed the same obligations upon all members of corporations within a year of their election. Between them they made it impossible for either a sincere Non-conformist or a devout Catholic to hold any influential position whatever in public life. The two statutes were the twin pillars of the Church's privilege.

But the pillars were not to the taste of the time. Even in the Tory Party there were men who voted with Lord John Russell, enough of them to carry the Bill with a majority that the Government could not ignore. The Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington, who twenty years before had contrived at Torres Vedras the most masterly retreat in military history, skilfully retreated once again, and induced the Lords to pass the Bill. That was bad for the Bishops, but there was worse to come.

II

In the spring (1829) Gladstone attended a meeting of Convocation in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, where he found two hundred doctors and masters of art debating a Petition which the University was to send up to Parliament against the Catholics that year (the University sent one every year).

'All the business there is transacted in Latin. And this rule, I assure you, stops many a mouth, and I dare say saves the Roman Catholics many a hard word.'

From his seat the Vice-Chancellor put the question: Should the Petition go up?

'Placet-ne vobis domini Doctores, placet-ne Magistri?'

'Placet! Placet!' the shouts rumbled up from the benches.

'Petitne aliquis scrutinum?' asked the Vice-Chancellor.

'Peto! Peto!' shouted a few determined reformers.

'However,' said Gladstone, 'when the scrutiny took place it was found that the Petition was carried by 146 to 48.'

There was silence as the Vice-Chancellor rose again, a letter in his hand. Robert Peel, senior burgess for the University, begged to resign his seat. The letter 'had just arrived, and I suppose brought hither the first positive and indubitable announcement of the Government's intention to emancipate the Catholics'.

That autumn Wellington and Peel forestalled popular clamour by the traditional Conservative policy of dishing the Whigs while there was still time, and passed an Emancipation Bill withdrawing all obstacles to the admission of Roman Catholics to Parliament and place.

Both pillars had fallen: the Temple started to topple. Oxford was aghast.

Gladstone noted that 'the bedmakers seem to continue in a great fright'. The old egg woman asked him, 'how Mr. Peel, who was always such a well-behaved gentleman down here, could be so foolish as to be thinking of

letting in those Roman Catholics'. His scout declared himself greatly worried for the King's conscience: 'If we make an oath at baptism, then we ought to hold by it.'

Young Arthur Hallam, arguing with the parent of an Eton friend, was crushed by the question: 'Can you say that any Papist has ever at any time done any good to the world?'

When Gladstone travelled back to college next term, a farmer's wife sitting next to him in the coach said they had all been much frightened over Catholic Emancipation, but she did not see that much had come of it as yet.

But the earnest, fresh-faced young man could not take it all so lightly. Things spiritual loomed large before him. In the course of a twenty-mile walk (with a young man destined to be a professor at King's before he was thirty and to be dead before he was thirty-one) Gladstone fell into a paroxysm of doubt over the rights and wrongs of all these happenings. 'Oh, for a light from on high; I have no power, none, to discern the right path for myself.' For an hour and a half the two talked 'on practical religion, particularly as regards our own situation'.

All round the Church's structure was cracking. Disestablishment was openly discussed. The Archbishop of Canterbury was pelted with cabbage-stalks. A persistent Irish rector who had brought forty-five suits to recover tithe was shot dead before he could bring the forty-sixth. And another clergyman was as drastically dealt with 'from behind a haycock in the West Country'. Serious youth in the face of portents such as these sought for firm spiritual ground. Gladstone wrote to one of the Oxford clergy about prayer meetings in his rooms on the Library staircase. His correspondent answered that as the wicked have their orgies and meet to gamble and to drink so they that fear the Lord should speak often to one another concerning Him. 'Prayer-meetings are not for the cultivation or exhibition of gifts, nor to enable

noisy and forward young men to pose as leaders of a school of prophets, but if a few young men of like tastes feel the withering influence of mere scholastic learning and the necessity of mutual stimulation and refreshment, then such meetings would be a safe and natural remedy.'

There were, however, at Oxford other facilities for 'the cultivation and exhibition of gifts' that no purist could decry. The University offered a prize for an essay on 'The Reconciliation of Matthew and John'. It was won by Martin Tupper, 'the poet', but Gladstone was so good a second that the donor of the prize begged that he might receive one-fifth of the money.

The search for light and guidance took Gladstone to all the churches in Oxford and many miles into the surrounding country. Sometimes he heard two sermons in the morning and afternoon and yet another one in the evening. 'Are all Mr. Keble's opinions those of the Church?' he asked. He heard Newman preach 'much singular not to say objectionable matter. Depend upon it, sermons such as those can never convert a single person.' The new Archbishop of Dublin he heard at St. Mary's. 'Doubtless he is a man of much power and many excellencies, but his anti-Sabbatical doctrine is, I fear, as mischievous as it is unsound.' One preacher upset him by a sermon in which Calvin 'was placed upon the same level among heresiarchs as Socinus'. A painful discourse from a Mr. Crowther moved him to deliver at the Divine's door a letter 'earnestly expostulating with him on the character and doctrines of his sermon'.

There were some slight compensations. The University sermon against Milman's *History of the Jews* delighted him, for 'Milman, though I do think without intentions directly evil, does go far enough to be justly called a bane'. Out at Marsh Baldon was Mr. Porter, 'a Calvinist and a man of remarkable power. I think he and other friends did me good, but I got little solid meat

from him as I found him difficult to catch and still more difficult to hold.' He heard a good sermon too from a Mr. Blanco White. He sat under Dr. Chalmers, 'though it was at the Baptist Chapel. His sermon was admirable . . . he preached I think for an hour and forty minutes.'

But his favourite preacher was Mr. Bulteel, the Low Church incumbent of the slum parish of St. Ebbs. 'It was among the most wonderful sights of my life to see St. Mary's crammed in all parts, by all orders, when Mr. Bulteel preached his accusatory sermon (some of it too true) against the University.' Alas, 'poor Mr. Bulteel lost his church for preaching in the open air. Pity that he should have acted so, and pity that it should be found necessary to make such an example.' And next time he heard him, Gladstone noted 'that the sermon was interesting but evinced some soreness of spirit'.

III

It was not until he was twenty-three and contemplating the stone-cold magnificence of St. Peter's at Rome that he first felt 'the pain and shame of the schism which separates us from Rome, whose guilt surely rests not upon the venerable Fathers of the English Reformed Church but upon Rome itself, yet whose melancholy effects the mind is doomed to feel whenever one enters this magnificent Temple'.

And it was in Naples that he came upon stability at last. 'One Sunday (May 13th 1832) something, I know not what, set me on examining the occasional offices of the Church in the Prayer Book. They made a strong impression upon me, and the impression has never been effaced. . . . The figure of the Church arose before me as a teacher. . . . Such . . . was my first introduction to the august conception of the Church of Christ. It presented to me Christianity under an aspect in which I

had not yet known it: its ministry of symbols, its channels of grace, its unending line of teachers joining from the Head.'

He returned to England and public life with the new thought welling up in his mind. The English Church was indeed losing many of the material instruments of its power, but might not these losses be more than made good by an increased realization of its Divine mission? Might it not emerge as the foundation, not, as in the past, of public office and influence, but of the whole English polity? 'Her foundations are on the holy hills. Her charter is Divine. She, if she should be excluded from the precinct of Government, may still fulfil all her functions and carry them out to perfection.'

IV

The popular onslaught against the Church of England had driven Gladstone by way of Mr. Bulteel's sermons, Mr. Chalmers's discourses, and the majestic conceptions of St. Peter's to a new and greater realization of the Church's spiritual authority. The pursuance of that onslaught by the Whig ministry against whom young Gladstone was now daily making his speeches and casting his votes evoked the same conception in the minds of many in the Church itself.

In 1833 the Government reduced the Establishment of the Irish Church by suppressing ten bishoprics. To a crowded congregation at St. Mary's, before His Majesty's judges and all Oxford's manifold dignitaries, municipal and academic, Mr. Keble preached the assize sermon on 'National Apostasy'. The preacher took his stand on the heavenly origin and Divine prerogative of the Church; and when all the judges, marshals, sheriffs, magistrates, aldermen, councillors, professors, heads of colleges, doctors and masters of arts adjourned to the weekly church parade under the elms in Christ Church

meadows they were conscious that something momentous had happened. That day the Oxford Movement was born.

The Church must not be regulated by the State, because the Church was Divine. She was Divine in virtue of the great Apostolic Succession handed down through the bishops from Christ Himself. Such was the answer—an answer worthy of Archbishop Laud himself—that the Oxford Group now made to the measures of the first Reform Parliament. In sermons, in letters, in discourses, and above all in those famous *Tracts for the Times* issued by a young man named Newman, the new doctrine was broadcast. 'With the hope of rousing members of our Church to comprehend her alarming position as a man might give notice of a fire or inundation to startle all who heard him.'

'They are strenuously circulated among the clergy,' wrote Dr. Arnold, the grim new head master of Rugby School; 'of course I do not suppose that any living man out of the clergy is in the slightest danger of being influenced by them except so far as they may lead him to despise the clergy for countenancing them.' But England was not Rugby School, and they did influence the clergy and the laity as well.

'We did but light a beacon fire on the summit of a lonely hill,' they said, 'and now we are amazed to find the firmament on every side red with the light of some responsive flame.'

Casting back to Laudian days for the expression of the new grace, young men enthusiastically revived the symbols and ceremonies that had been forgotten for six generations. They fasted, did penance, and went on pilgrimages; they recited the hours of the Roman breviary and confessed their sins to the priests. Everywhere stories were whispered of priestly claims and the obedience of novices, of oratories and crucifixes, of attacks upon the Reformation and homage to the memory of King Charles the Royal Martyr.

Yet behind this façade of Gothic mysticism and Stuart romanticism stirred the spirit of shrewd nineteenth-century reality. A beacon fire needs feeding; and the leaders of the movement got to work to pull strings and tap subscriptions. Chief among them, tall, dark, restless, and indiscreet, John Henry Newman cast an appraising eye over the list of his friends in high places. That eye lighted on the name of William Ewart Gladstone. But was it fair to ask a rising young man, especially a politician, openly to compromise himself so far? 'As to Gladstone, perhaps it would be wrong to ask the young man so to commit himself.'

None the less, the overtures were made. They happened at a moment when Gladstone was reeling under the death of his most intimate friend. 'Post hour to-day brought me a melancholy announcement, the death of Arthur Hallam. When shall I see his like? Yet this dispensation is not all pain, for there is a hope and not (in my mind) a bare or rash hope that his soul rests with God in Jesus Christ.' His great need for spiritual solace came to him at the time when his mind had already turned to a consideration of the Church's authority and future. 'I had an inclination to ecclesiastical conformity and obedience as such', he writes. Now, from Oxford came Newman's call to action, and Gladstone 'was not of a mind ill-disposed to submit to authority'. 'Twenty-four years have I lived. Where is the continuous work which ought to fill up the life of a Christian without intermission? Business and political excitement . . . dragging down the soul from that temper which is fit to inhale the air of heaven.'

That month (December 1833) Newman felt justified in recording: 'The Duke of Newcastle has joined us, Gladstone, etc. I suppose these names must not be mentioned.' Within four weeks Gladstone accepted Newman's invitation to Oxford. He dined with him at Oriel, where they talked chiefly 'on Church matters'.

After which Gladstone withdrew to read St. Chrysostom's remarks on the 'Sanctity of Priesthood'.

He returned to London fortified and cheered to fight the Church's battle. Almost at once hostilities began. Mr. Hume, the Radical member for Middlesex, early in the Session of 1834 introduced his Universities Admission Bill to enable Nonconformists to enter the Universities by removing the need to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles at matriculation.

Oxford was bitterly antagonistic. In the Sheldonian the mention of dissenters brought forth a prolonged snuffle followed by a nasal 'Amen' from the crowded galleries. And the Gower Street Company, as they called the new University in London, was hooted.

Mr. Hume argued for his Bill upon generalities. Gladstone chose to join issue on its practical implications, exploiting to the utmost his acquaintance (and Hume's ignorance) of the inner workings of the University. 'His voice', noted an onlooker who heard Gladstone in the debate, 'was clear, flexible, and melodious, though his utterance was marked by a Lancastrian burr. His gesture was varied and animated, but not violent. He turned his face and body from side to side and often wheeled round to face his own party as he appealed for their cheers.'

The Vice-Chancellor, he urged, might be debarred from putting the Articles to a candidate for matriculation; but the colleges would still refuse him admittance unless he subscribed. And as the colleges were self-governing bodies, they could never be controlled as the honourable member for Middlesex appeared to imagine. The Bill would 'be practically inoperative; it would nevertheless inevitably lead to dissension and confusion'. Moreover, a University education aimed at the formation of character, and it could never fulfil its purpose if every student were free to ignore the religious side which was so vital a factor of its make-up.

The bluff and forceful member for Tiverton, Mr. Palmerston, interposed to express his doubts about a system which compelled the undergraduate to go 'from wine to prayers and from prayers to wine'. Whereas Gladstone indignantly protested that the young men, 'even in their most convivial moments, were not unfit to enter the House of Prayer'.

On Third Reading there was 'a disgraceful scene of jeering, shouting, coughing, and crowing', but it passed none the less by a majority of 164 to 75. The Bill then went on its way to the Lords, who threw it out by 187 votes to 85.

V

Gladstone had spoken on the Universities Bill for thirty-five minutes 'with more ease than I had hoped, having been more mindful of Divine aid'. His whole being was stirred. He spent many hours 'in long and solemn conversation on the doctrine of the Trinity'. He wrote an essay on 'Saving Faith'.

Not only were the walls of the Church shaking under the battering rams of Dissenter and Catholic, Liberal and Freethinker, but their very foundation in Faith was mined. The industrious Schleiermacher was discovering facts in geology which did not accord with Genesis. And a Church of England clergyman, more learned than wise, came upon the forms and ceremonies of the Church of England in the primitive folk-lore of pagan peoples and published his researches under the title of *The Devil's Pulpit*. Gladstone discussed the freethinking tendencies of the times with His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland. 'The Duke made many acute remarks. He spoke broadly and freely, much on the disappearance of the bishops' wigs, which, he said, had done more harm to the Church than anything else.' A lady of rank asked Sir Robert Peel whether he ever commenced any official

business without prayer. 'He would not say', he admitted, 'that each individual matter was prefaced with prayer, but he certainly never commenced a day without praying for the Divine aid in his business, as he well knew nothing could be done without it.'

But over the flowers of orthodoxy and the weeds of heresy alike the wheels of time thundered unheedingly. The Whig Government which had freed the slaves and championed the Dissenters was gone. Gone too was the old House of Commons that they sat in. Lord Melbourne had succeeded Lord Grey, and Sir Robert Peel had succeeded Lord Melbourne. Gladstone had been in office as a junior Lord of the Treasury, and now was out of it. King William the Fourth had died. A young girl called Victoria sat upon the Throne of England, and a connexion with Hanover that had lasted for a century and a quarter was severed. It was 1838.

A vast audience, including royal princes and bishops and members of both Houses, crowded the rooms in Hanover Square, where the mighty Dr. Chalmers of Edinburgh was passionately pleading the cause of Church Establishment. His argument was blunt and delightfully simple. Parliament being a Christian body was bound to know and establish the truth; but not being made of theologians could not follow the truth into its minuter shadings and must proceed upon broad lines. There was a religious system which, taken in the rough, was Truth; this was known as Protestantism. And to its varieties, it was not the business of the legislature to have regard. On the other side lay a system which, taken again in the rough, was error. This system was known as Popery. Parliament, therefore, was bound to establish and endow some kind of Protestantism and *not* to establish or endow Popery. 'Should the disaster ever befall us,' he thundered, 'of vulgar and upstart politicians becoming lords of the ascendant, and an infidel or semi-infidel government wielding the destinies

of this mighty Empire, and should they be willing at the shrines of their own wretched partisanship to make sacrifice of those great and hallowed institutions which were consecrated by our ancestors to the maintenance of religious truth and religious liberty—should, in particular, the monstrous proposition ever be entertained to abridge the legal funds for the support of Protestantism—let us hope that there is still enough, not of fiery zeal, but of calm, resolute, enlightened principle in the land to resent the outrage—enough of energy and reaction in the revolted sense of this great country to meet and overbear it.’

Gladstone sat beneath him. The Doctor was no stranger to him; he had heard him once at Oxford and many times in Edinburgh, and was sorely exercised for an appropriate form of answer to the ‘very respectfully yours’ with which the man of sixty insisted on ending his letters. But on this occasion the Doctor’s arguments did not please him. ‘Such a jumble of Church, un-Church, and anti-Church principles,’ he wrote to Manning, the Tractarian leader, at Oxford, ‘no human being ever heard. . . . He flogged the Apostolic Succession grievously, seven Bishops sitting below him and the Duke of Cambridge incessantly bobbing assent. . . . I do not believe he has ever looked in the face the real doctrine of the visible Church and the Apostolical Succession or has any idea what is the matter at issue.’

Gladstone had definitely swung into accord with the Tractarians. For he could never concede with Chalmers that it was not the business of the legislature ‘to have regard to the varieties of Protestantism’ or ally himself with those ‘who flogged the Apostolic Succession’. In his eyes, as in the eyes of the Tractarians, the Church of England was the one true church. As such she must stand supreme. As the sole repository of Divine Truth she must enjoy a monopoly of State support.

For fear lest that ‘furore for Church Establishment’

which had 'come down upon the Conservative squadrons' might be misdirected by the eloquence of Chalmers, Gladstone decided that something must be done immediately. *Tracts for the Times* had prepared the public mind to receive the seed. Samuel Wilberforce, later Bishop of Winchester, wrote: 'Few men have the weight . . . you are gaining rapidly throughout the country. . . . I would have you view yourself as one who may become the maintainer of its Church and of its liberties and who must now be fitting himself for this high Vocation.' George Selwyn, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield, dedicated his pamphlet *Are Cathedral Institutions Useless?* to him. Accordingly he wrote to the publisher, John Murray (II) in July (1838), that he considered publishing 'some papers on the relationship of the Church and the State which will probably fill a moderate octavo volume'. And he also wrote to his Oxford friend, the Tractarian John Hope, for advice 'whether either the work or some of the chapters are not so deficient in clearness and arrangement as to require being absolutely re-written before they can with propriety be published. Between my eyes and my business I fear it would be hard for me to re-write.' Hope 'used the pencil very unscrupulously', submitting suggestions 'both subtle and voluminous'. In August, John Murray had finished with the manuscript. On the 16th, Gladstone went aboard the Rotterdam packet for his holiday at the baths of Ems, taking the proofs with him. Unfortunately, he was compelled to write to John Murray 'a line from Rotterdam to say that sea-sickness prevented my correcting the proofs on the passage'.

From among the hill-side walks of Ems the corrected proofs were submitted to Hope at Oxford, who wrote five weeks later that the book was (unlike the Rotterdam packet!) 'a noble vessel freighted with the riches of a true wisdom, directed by a spirit of pure and fervent piety, furnished out with knowledge and a practical experience'.

In the late summer Gladstone travelled down to Sicily, saw 'the commencement of a slight eruption of Etna', and furnished a long account of it to John Murray for his new handbook of Southern Italy. By Christmas he was back in Rome. There, too, was Manning the Tractarian. Together they went to hear Mass with the Pope's choir and sat on the bench behind the cardinals (with whom Manning was to sit thirteen years later). They called on Dr. Wiseman (the English Catholic and cardinal to be) and accepted from him a lesson in the Missal. Together, too, they walked in St. Peter's, where Gladstone recalled that earlier visit which had fired him with his first conception of the unity of the Church and the desire for its attainment. 'That idea has been, I believe, the ruling one of my life during the period that has since elapsed.'

VI

When he got back to London in January 1839 his moderate octavo volume entitled *The State in its Relations with the Church* was already in its second edition.

It was 'Inscribed to the University of Oxford tried and not found wanting through the viscissitudes of a thousand years; in the belief that she is providentially designed to be a fountain of blessings spiritual, social, and intellectual to this and to other countries, to the present and future times; and in the hope that the temper of these pages may be found not alien from her own.'

Gladstone opened his work by stating the theories of Hooker, Warburton, Paley, Coleridge, Chalmers, Hobbes, Bellarmine, and the Ultramontanes. He passed on to consider the theory of the connexion between Church and State: 'We know of no effectual preservative principle except religion, nor of any permanent, secure, and authenticated religion but in the Church.'

He laid down as requisites to the function of that

Church, first, 'A clergy or order of men set apart for religion'; second, 'a legal provision for their maintenance'; third, 'the restriction of that provision to the ministers of a particular sect'.

A National Church, he concluded, 'brings human and secondary motives to bear upon mankind in favour of religion with a power greater . . . than would belong to it when unestablished, because . . . it would not occupy the same station in public estimation'.

Then followed an historical sketch of the relations of Church and State in England from the Reformation to the time of writing. 'When foreigners express their astonishment at finding that we support in Ireland the Church of a small minority we may tell them that we support it on the high ground of conscientious necessity: for its truth.'

Finally he marshalled the results of a vast field of historical, philosophical, and speculative inquiry. He scouted the possibility of a generalized State religion without distinction of forms or tenets because too loose an interpretation of Christianity might prepare the way, through anarchy in belief, to 'the consummation of human apostasy, the introduction of social atheism, and the destruction of individual morality. I ardently desire', he concluded, 'the full and effective action of the State for the promotion of religion; and yet more ardently, that general and free coincidence of my fellow-citizens in the principles of Catholic unity, through which alone, as I believe, the former object is attainable.'

The Archbishop of Canterbury praised the book highly. The Bishop of London approved of it warmly. The Prussian Minister, Bunsen, called it 'the book of the time', and sent it 'with some hundred marginal notes and effusions of heart' to his master, the Crown Prince William (afterwards first Emperor of Germany). Dr. Arnold admired the spirit and liked the substance of half; but thought the other half was thoroughly

erroneous. William Wordsworth thought the author had gone too far about the Apostolic Succession. Carlyle told Emerson that 'a certain Mr. Gladstone, an Oxford crack scholar, Tory M.P., and devout Churchman of great talent and hope, makes some figure at present'. Macaulay, who dealt with the work in the *Edinburgh Review*, said: 'We believe we do him no more than justice when we say that his abilities and demeanour have obtained for him the respect and goodwill of all parties.' And *The Times* made it the subject of a leading article.

But Mr. Macaulay and the Prussian Ambassador and Dr. Arnold had no political responsibilities. When Gladstone dined at Sir Robert Peel's there was 'not a word from him, Stanley, or Graham to acknowledge my poor book'. And when the author had gone, Sir Robert testily asked 'why a man with so fine a career before him should go out of his way to write books'. 'Scarcely had my work issued from the press,' lamented the author, 'when I became aware that there was no party, no section of a party, no individual person probably in the House of Commons, who was prepared to act on it. Exclusive support of the Established religion of the country had been the rule, but when I bade it live it was just about to die.'

Gladstone was only twenty-nine and already a Lord of the Treasury (at a time when there was no publicity value in being young). He was looked upon as a coming leader both in Church and State. He had impressed his personality upon his age as no man had done before or since. And he had done it not by any meretricious self-advertisement nor by the exploitation of a family name, but by solid achievement buttressed with hard work and sound learning painstakingly acquired. His constant courtesy to opponents and the transparent sincerity of his principles had impressed friends and enemies alike, but this very sincerity had now betrayed him into

committing his first big blunder. His theories were worse than unpractical: they were inexpedient. The Archbishop of Dublin had called it an honest book; the trouble was that it was too honest. As Gladstone himself put it: 'The work was written in total disregard, or rather ignorance, of the conditions under which political action was possible. It involved me in a good deal of embarrassment.'

Moreover, Wordsworth had gauged the matter aright when he said the author had gone too far; for the Tractarians were no fit associates for a rising young Tory politician. 'It is quite clear to us,' observed *The Times*, 'from many passages in Mr. W. E. Gladstone's volume that that . . . person is deeply and we fear irrevocably contaminated with these newfangled Oxford bigotries. . . . We must painfully declare that our further acquaintance with the opinions of this writer has greatly shaken our confidence in his judgment . . . this puerile bigotry is discreditable . . . he has done little else than disturb questions which under the present temper no discreet Christian should have ventured to revive. If this gentleman's views of the Church of England as a tame dilution of Romanism could be supposed to obtain extensive credit she may henceforth write *ichabod* upon all her gates, for assuredly her doom is sealed.'

'Some people say it is crazy and nonsensical,' wrote Mr. Henry Taylor, 'others that it will ruin him in political life; many that it is bigoted and Papistical.'

'Poor Gladstone,' lamented Newman, 'really I feel as if I could do anything for him. I have not read his book, but its consequences speak for it. Poor fellow, it is so noble a thing.'

VII

In Sicily, during the previous winter, Gladstone had met a Miss Catherine Glynne, the twenty-six-year-old daughter of a Welsh baronet. She was the sister of an

Oxford friend, slender, vivacious, with a straight nose and waving hair. They walked together in several Roman churches, where, comparing the bareness of English churches with the solid comfort of English homes, she asked him whether 'we can be justified in all these luxuries'? 'I loved her for this question. How sweet a thing that her heart and will are entirely in the hands of God.'

He proposed to her by moonlight in the ruins of the Colosseum; and in June 1839 broke off a letter on the Duty of the State to the Church to observe that 'private circumstances of no common interest are upon me as I have become engaged to . . . Miss Glynne'.

They were married at Hawarden, in Flintshire, the country seat of the bride's father, on Thursday, July 25th 1839. At five in the morning the village awoke to the ringing of bells and the discharge of cannon. The wedding procession passed through a street hung with laurel. There were four bands and detachments from all the surrounding Oddfellow lodges, temperance leagues, and benefit societies, and 'tradespeople in large numbers' escorted the carriages to the church porch. After an anthem, the bride, dressed in 'peach white satin trimmed with tinsel flounces and with a diamond in the centre of her orange-blossom wreath', accompanied by bridesmaids in 'mulled muslin and crêpe lace bonnets' was given away by her father. The Dean of Windsor, the bride's uncle, performed the ceremony. 'On quitting the church, the marriage-party passed through the clubs which were ranged on each side, the bands playing, the populace cheering, and many of the poor weeping at beholding their generous benefactress leaving the scenes where she had so frequently stretched out the hand of benevolence in relieving the widow and the fatherless.'

The bride gave £100 to supply clothing to the necessitous in the district and another £120 was supplied by her neighbours for the relief of the poor.

The best man was Sir Francis Doyle, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, who urged the bride to:

Covet not, then, the rest of those
Who sleep through life unknown to fame;
Fate grants not passionless repose
To her who weds a glorious name.

The young couple were smothered with good wishes, and every one of them came true. She was born three years after him. She died two years after him. He lived to be eighty-nine and she to be eighty-eight. For sixty years they knew the perfect love all earthly joys transcending; and when Death came at last to part them, that July morning at Hawarden still seemed like yesterday.

VIII

The marriage festivities were only an interlude. In the autumn Gladstone once more had to face the position created by the publication of his book.

'It involved me personally in a good deal of embarrassment. . . . In the sanguine fervour of youth I dreamed that the Church was capable of recovering lost ground, and of bringing back the nation to unity in her communion. . . .'

The land was overspread with a thick curtain of prejudice. The foundations of the historic Church of England, except in the minds of a few divines, were obscured. The evangelical movement, with all its virtues and merits, had the vice of individualizing religion in a degree perhaps unexampled, and of rendering the language of Holy Scripture about Mount Sion and the Kingdom of Heaven little better than a jargon. To meet the demands of the coming time it was a matter of vital necessity to cut a way through all this darkness to a clearer and more solid position.

In fact, nature had designed, and his surroundings had

shaped, him to be an archbishop. As a child he had sat under one divine after another. He came of a stock that always looked for Biblical authority for every step it suited them to take; and they usually managed to find it. At Oxford, sermons and churches had dominated his life. On holiday he could not refrain from contrasting the preaching he heard abroad with the preaching he heard at home. Even when standing for a pocket borough, he persisted in regarding himself as the champion of the Christian faith rather than as the Duke of Newcastle's nominee. And in seeking to reconcile the two he contrived inextricably to intermix Christianity with the Conservative Party. 'There was in my eyes,' he admitted afterwards, 'a certain element of Antichrist in the Reform Act.'

In the House he found no difficulty in reconciling his philosophy to facts. For if the Conservative Party was not identical with the Christian faith it was identified with its earthly vehicle, as the mass of Englishmen saw it, the Church of England. 'It was my opinion that as to religions other than those of the State the State should only tolerate and not pay. So I was against salaries for prison chaplains not of the Church.'

In an endeavour to rationalize his creed in accordance with the complex problems of public policy he had written *The Church in its Relation to the State*. It came as a shock when Conservative members, less anxious to be reckoned among the elect than among the elected, refused to take his work very seriously. It wounded both his Christianity and his Conservatism; and the latter never properly recovered.

But he was not going to surrender his beliefs nor temper them to expediency. Perhaps *The State in its Relations with the Church* had not been sufficiently clear or concrete to make its point. He would try again.

In August 1840 he published *Church Principles Considered by their Results*. It laid down the mathematical

certainty of the Apostolical Succession and the historical case for the Church of England, which had preserved the purity of the Christian doctrine against the accretions of papal dogma and the innovations of dissenting sects. In the earlier book he had argued that the State should identify itself with the Church of England. Now, more simply and in greater detail, he gave his reasons.

'It is doctrinaire, and I think somewhat self-confident,' said Newman, 'but it will do good.'

It did not. 'I do not think it would be wise to review it', Macaulay remarked. 'I have no mind to engage in a controversy about the nature of the sacraments, the operation of Holy orders, or the visibility of the Church. I have no disposition to split hairs about the spiritual reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist or about baptismal regeneration.' The encyclopaedic reviewer devoted himself to an article on the comic dramatists of the Restoration instead.

In his grim study in the yellow brick schoolhouse at Rugby, Dr. Arnold sat and shook his head over the book's 'incredible errors'.

Gladstone's work was ignored; nobody even bothered to attack it. The author suggested to John Murray that 'it might be well to advertise it a little in order to revive the sale', and consoled himself because 'the copies did not find their way much into the second-hand shops'.

The theologians remained unmoved; the Conservatives were not interested. When the book came out he still told Manning that 'reflection shows me that the political position is mainly valuable as instrumental for the good of the Church'. When it had after all appeared in the second-hand bookshops, he told his father 'every year shows me more and more that the idea of Christian politics cannot be realized in the State'.

And now his attachment to the Conservative Party was no longer the mystic bond of faith in a divinely

appointed instrument but the fragile tie of political expediency.

Yet throughout his long life his religion was the force which shaped his thoughts and inspired his actions. And when he left the Conservatives to go first to the Peelites and then to the Liberals, he took his Church principles with him. If at times they spurred him to do what was righteous rather than what was right, and at others to invest the jockeyings of party politics with the majesty of Divine Sanction, they always clothed him with a steadfast sincerity. That sincerity which men knew William Ewart Gladstone would never sacrifice for expediency or for gain was something more than an original contribution to English public life; it became the single factor which for half a century drove the wheels of the democracy he served.

YELLOW

YELLOW

PART I

I

GENTLY and indistinctly, in a fading grandeur of gold and crimson, like one of the sunsets that Mr. Turner painted with such an exquisite sensibility, the rule of the aristocrats was fading away. True, the Tories still followed the Duke. But 'the Duke appears to speak little. . . . He receives remarks made to him very frequently with no more than "Ha!" a convenient suspensive expression which acknowledges the arrival of the observation and no more.'

The new Conservatism followed Sir Robert Peel, son of a Lancashire calico-printer. The day of the middle classes was dawning with all the crude distinctness of a Landseer oleograph.

II

In the summer of 1841 Parliament was dissolved, and Gladstone stood for the fourth time on the hustings at Newark. The issue touched the foundations of aristocratic power, for the middle classes were questioning the expediency of continuing the protective duties on foreign corn. The tussle lay between the new manufacturing interest, which wanted cheaper food so that the cost of production should not be increased by higher wages, and the old landed interest, which sought to keep corn at a high price so that rents could be kept up as well. Gladstone took the protectionist side because it was his party's; but his mind was more set upon Church principles than upon Corn Laws. So too, apparently, were those of some of his electors. One old lady complained that 'not content with keeping bread from

the people, he sought by a new faith, the monster Puseyism, to take the Bread of Life away from them as well'. The Wesleyans also were unreliable, because if they had not read the book they had heard uncomfortable things about it. But the pendulum was swinging the right way and Gladstone was returned with a poll of 633.

When the new House met there was a Tory majority of eighty, and the Queen sent for Sir Robert Peel. Gladstone was admitted to the inner conclaves of his party at Sir Robert's and Lord Aberdeen's. There was much shaking of heads, for notwithstanding the Government's imposing majority there were some dangerous fellows on the opposition side. People talked much of the new Radical member for Stockport, Richard Cobden, 'a worrying man on corn', as Gladstone noted. The clash was clearly coming on fiscal policy, and Peel decided to approach Gladstone.

'In consequence of a note received this morning [August 31st] I went to him [Peel]. . . . He said, "In this great struggle the chief importance will attach to . . . finance. I think we shall be very strong in the House if . . . you will accept the post of Vice-President of the Board of Trade. . . . I consider it an office of the highest importance and you will have my unbounded confidence.'"

So on 3rd September, at the age of thirty-two, Gladstone kissed hands as a Minister.

'The Duke went in an open carriage with a pair', he noted. 'All our other grand people with four.'

'The Queen sat at the head of the table, composed but dejected. . . . Prince Albert sat on her right. Peel looked shy all through. . . .'

III

His new office found Gladstone 'totally ignorant, both of political economy and of the commerce of the country'.

'My mind was a sheet of white paper, except that it was coloured by a traditional prejudice of protection, which had then quite recently become a distinctive mark of Conservatism.' So at the Board of Trade, although there was a lot to do, there was still more to learn. A deputation of coopers objected that imported casks were ruining the price of their wares. The sawyers not only complained that the new machinery was throwing hands out of work, but also demanded that the Board of Trade should arrest the progress of cast-iron in ousting wood. Departmental clerks propounded such conundrums as, 'Was the duty on straw bonnets to go by weight or by number?' 'How to reconcile the conflicting interests of liquorice manufacturers in London and liquorice growers in Pontefract?' 'Wherein precisely lay the true distinction between raisins and muscatels?' And 'Should skins be treated on the same terms as hides?'

One morning a deputation came up from his own county with a person in 'dark Quaker costume' at their head. 'Eagerly he sat a little forward on the bench. He seemed to me rather fierce, but very strong and very earnest.' 'Who is that?' asked the Minister. 'A cotton-spinner from Rochdale. His name is John Bright.'

The man from Lancashire had a strangely revolutionary policy to impress upon the Department. He believed, it seemed, in the theories of the new Manchester School of Economists. If, he argued, Britain would only abolish the duties on corn the poor would not only have sufficient to eat but the nation as a whole would actually benefit; for by buying corn from abroad she would so enrich her suppliers as to enable them to become customers for the goods she manufactured at home. This was Free Trade. And he put its case with fervour, as well he might.

In Lancashire, where he came from, the people were desperate. Wolfish bands of starving wretches were

extorting tribute from shopkeepers and shoppers in the streets of Manchester. And in Stockport half the master-spinners had failed.

Gladstone was uneasy. Too well he knew that the story of Lancashire was the story of England. In Carlisle one person in every four was starving to death. At Leeds they were paying bounties for men to leave the country. A third of Hinckley had become paupers.

His party justified horrors such as these by pleading that agriculture could only be preserved by the duties on foreign corn. But was agriculture worth preserving when the Dorset labourer had to keep a family on half a crown a week and three loaves of bread?

Mysterious strangers were appearing in city and shire. Night-time was lit by the blazing of ricks and made hideous with the din of breaking machines. In the darkness there were strange gatherings at cross-roads, where by the light of flaring dips wild-eyed speakers preached the class war. In the Potteries they were pulling down houses over their owners' heads. Even in the metropolis Peel's new police seemed as inadequate as the old 'Charleys'. And Lady Peel slept behind sentries at Drayton Manor.

Yet worse. Sir Robert's private secretary, Mr. Edward Drummond, was shot dead in the public street. Pistols were fired at the young Queen herself.

At the Board of Trade, Gladstone was ploughing his way through the trade returns. The more he applied his mind to economics the less of a Protectionist he was becoming. Lord Ripon, his chief, was a cipher; but his departmental secretaries were both Free Traders, and 'that autumn I became possessed with a desire to relax the Corn Law'.

Harassed, heavy-eyed and well-nigh broken, Peel still carried on. Sacrifice agriculture, take off the duties, feed the people. But how could it be done? The deficit for 1843 was £2½ millions and Whig finance had left

huge arrears. Would the moneyed men stand for an income tax of sevenpence in the pound, bringing in £4½ millions to make good a reduction in the corn duties?

At last, on one never-to-be-forgotten Friday evening, Sir Robert rose on the Treasury Bench and took the draft of his Budget speech from Gladstone's hands. The income tax was to be imposed; the duties on corn were to be graduated on a sliding scale; and the tariffs on 750 necessities were reduced, in many cases, to nominal levels. That session Gladstone spoke one hundred and twenty-nine times. One member wanted Free Trade in everything but herrings. Another would only keep a tariff on straw plait. Lord Stanhope asserted that the end of it all would be that the British Navy would be fed by foreigners.

On the 28th June Peel's Budget was passed.

It was not enough for the Free Traders. So long as corn was taxed, were it only a shilling a quarter, the labouring classes were still paying an artificially high price for their food, at a time when they and their families were starving. The young Anti-Corn Law League was sweeping the country with its petitions and its monster meetings with a fervour that recalled the anti-slavery campaign. At a crowded meeting in Manchester it was resolved, amid wild enthusiasm, to raise £100,000 for propaganda. Six persons stepped forward and offered £500 apiece; and before the evening ended £13,000 had been raised. The League booked Drury Lane Theatre and crowded it out; and a Free Trader was returned for the City of London. In every factory and market town men knew the homely eloquence of Richard Cobden: 'I don't care whether you call it right or wrong; this way my instincts drive me and this way I am going.' And the fiery periods of John Bright: 'There is not on the record of any other people at any time, much less of any civilized and professedly Christian

people, so astounding a crime against the security of the Government itself, and against the population it was called upon to rule, as the Corn Laws.'

But it was too much for the Protectionists. Uneasily the landed interest recalled the stages by which Peel had 'betrayed' the Church of England, and asked themselves whether the man who had surrendered Protestantism might not surrender Protectionism as well. The Speaker remarked that Peel had lost all but votes. 'Sir Robert has nothing but his majority,' said Hobhouse, the Radical. 'He won't have that long,' rejoined a Tory friend. 'Who will make sacrifices for such a fellow? The first election that comes, out he must go.'

Peel needed all his friends, and in May (1843) Gladstone, promoted President, was brought into the Cabinet. Unfortunately, his Free Trade opinions were outstripping his leader's. 'My reputation among the Conservatives,' he said, 'on the question of Protection oozed away with rapidity.' The Duke of Richmond lamented the 'renegade proceedings conducted under the banner of the Board of Trade'. Brougham, on the other side, said, 'This Gladstone was a damned fellow, a prig, who did much mischief to the Government.'

The effect of the Budget was disappointing. Trade continued to languish and Gladstone had to report that 'the deadness of foreign demand keeps our commerce in a state of prolonged paralysis'.

In some directions there was progress. A new device called the Electric Telegraph was tried out on wires that stretched from Paddington to Slough, and in 1844 private enterprise was empowered to apply the new invention by the first Telegraph Act. Gladstone, at the Board of Trade, was 'well aware of the advantage of taking them into the hands of the Government', but there was not time for everything and his energies were directed towards an even bigger development.

A rash of railways was breaking out over the face of England. For the past twenty years men had been engaged in adapting the locomotive, designed to haul colliery trucks, to draw train-loads of passengers through the countryside at more than forty miles an hour. Already the stage-coaches were looking old-fashioned, and the posting-houses complained of lack of custom. Wagon-loads of gentlemen in stove-pipe hats were surveying copses and coverts from an altogether new angle, sometimes under a shower of stones from an infuriated tenantry. Clouds of black smoke belched out of cuttings and tunnels as from the mouth of hell. And progressive landowners hitched the family coach not to a star but to a steam-engine.

It was the grand transformation scene of the century. When Sir Robert Peel posted from Rome to form the Administration three summers back he could journey no faster than the Emperor Hadrian had done sixteen hundred years before. But now, for a few shillings, the humblest mechanic could travel five times the rate. The whole *tempo* of life was speeded up beyond the wildest fancies of the *Arabian Nights*; and not even a generation that has seen everyday travel increased from 50 miles an hour to a speed of 120 can grasp the sudden wonder of jumping from 12 to 50 that unfolded itself to Gladstone on his thirty-fifth birthday.

A dizzy England rushed into the greatest gamble since the South Sea Bubble. Throgmorton Street was impassable. In three years 797 miles of railroad increased to 4,790. New companies sprang up like toadstools. There was neither system nor purpose in it. Lines were laid solely to compete with one another. Tracks petered out in marshes and on moors. It was the very apotheosis of individual enterprise.

But not every one was dazzled by this smoky wonder. To Gladstone at the Board of Trade came a shower of protests and demands for Government action.

'I hope you will allow me as Head Master of Eton,' wrote Dr. Keate, 'to address you . . . upon a subject of vital importance. . . . We are threatened with two railroads, one on each side of the college and close to its walls. . . . They have been projected by speculators . . . they cannot be beneficial to the town, they must be injurious to Eton, interfering with the discipline of the school, the studies and amusements of the boys, affecting the healthiness of the place from the increase of floods, and endangering even the lives of boys. . . .'

'We are in this neighbourhood all in consternation,' wrote William Wordsworth ('that excellent man and good poet who always goes to bed at nine and never drinks anything stronger than green tea'), 'that is, every man of taste and feeling, for a branch railway to the head of Windermere. . . . The project . . . will destroy the staple of the county which is its beauty. And on the Lord's Day particularly will prove subversive of all quiet and highly injurious to morals.' And the ageing poet vented his wrath in sonnet form:

Proud were ye, Mountains, when, in times of old,
Your patriot sons, to stem invasive war,
Intrenched your brows; ye gloried in each scar:
Now, for your shame, a Power, the Thirst of Gold,
That rules o'er Britain like a baneful star,
Wills that your peace, your beauty, shall be sold,
And clear way made for her triumphal car
Through the beloved retreats your arms enfold!
Hear ye that Whistle? As her long-linked Train
Swept onwards, did the vision cross your view?
Yes, ye were startled;—and, in balance true,
Weighing the mischief with the promised gain,
Mountains, and Vales, and Floods, I call on you
To share the passion of a just disdain.

Gladstone was fully alive to 'the thirst of gold that ruled o'er Britain'. 'I would no more trust the railway proprietor on railway matters than I would Gracchus speaking on sedition,' he said in the House. His remedy

was to nationalize the railways and the telegraphs too. He introduced a Bill to that end, and the vested interests fought him tooth and nail. The Act, which he eventually carried, was only the shadow of his Bill and gave the nation the *option* of buying out the railway proprietors in twenty-one years' time. But he forced the companies to run frequent third-class carriages, to provide them with seats and covering from the weather, to stop at convenient places, and not to charge more than one penny a mile for third-class passengers.

IV

There was trouble in Ireland too. Stirred by the fiery oratory of the mountainous Daniel O'Connell, vast mobs of screaming Irishmen were shouting for the repeal of the Union with England. Peel, true to his principles of moderation, tried to be conciliatory. He proposed that the Treasury should increase from £9,000 to £30,000 the annual grant it made to the Catholic seminary established at Maynooth, near Dublin, to provide a supply of Irish-trained priests. He hoped in this way that he would not only conciliate O'Connell but would increase the proportion of native-trained priests to those 'contaminated' by a foreign education.

Gladstone found it hard to reconcile this proceeding with his conscience. He had dealt rather fully with the question of Maynooth in his book on Church and State, and he had come to this conclusion: 'We support in Ireland . . . the Church of a small minority . . . for its truth. But how can we evince the consistency which so elevated a principle requires while we . . . support an institution whose purpose is . . . to denounce that truth as falsehood?'

To go back on this position within six years would be to sacrifice his consistency. And he valued that above all things. In January 1845 the Maynooth grant was

proposed in Parliament; on the 3rd February Gladstone resigned.

v

'Three weeks of rain, when the wheat is ripening, will rain away the Corn Law', said Cobden. It did. That autumn, of 1845, the potato rot set in in Ireland; and the Anti-Corn Law League secured its most important recruit—Famine. One-third of the entire crop was destroyed. Fourteen victims were buried on a Sunday at Kilmore, eleven without coffins, in the rags they dropped in. There were one hundred and forty deaths that month in the workhouse at Skibbereen, and the roadmen were collapsing 'never to rise again', since, the *Sunday Times* reported, 'the unfed wretches have not energy enough to keep their blood in circulation, and they drop down from the united efforts of cold and hunger'. Wretched men tried to anticipate the pest and gnawed at the unripe tubers they had dug up.

O the praties they are small over here,
And we pull them in the fall,
And we eat them skins and all,
Over here.

Peel himself was converted. The duties must go. But his party thought otherwise and decided that Peel must go himself. Lord John Russell, the Opposition leader, tried to form a Government in a House with a Conservative majority and failed. On the 20th December 1845 the Queen sent for Peel again. The Free Trade tide was nearly at the flood.

Two days later the new Prime Minister asked Gladstone to come and see him and offered him the Secretaryship of the Colonies. 'Peel was most kind, nay, fatherly; we held hands instinctively and I could but reciprocate with emphasis his "God bless you".' Gladstone was being cursed by the Die-hards for having converted

Peel; but now that the conversion was bearing fruit malicious irony kept him out of the House during the next six vital months. As a Minister he must face a by-election. But Newark was an agricultural seat, and it was in the pocket of that unyielding Protectionist, the Duke of Newcastle. And for a Peelite to get elected at that juncture was impossible: Protectionists would never back him, Free Trader preferred to vote for Whigs.

And so with Gladstone, his great stand-by, out of the House and with two-thirds of his party ranged against him, Peel set to work to repeal the Corn Laws. With a solitary exception his old Cabinet declined to follow him. But he formed a new Cabinet, one 'which will last long enough to carry Free Trade'. Mr. Disraeli headed the malcontents. It was Mr. Disraeli who launched a savage personal attack on the Prime Minister. 'I am not one of the converts. . . . To the opinions I have expressed in favour of Protection I still adhere. If *I* had relinquished them *I* should have relinquished my seat also. . . .' He compared Peel with a Turkish admiral who took his master's fleet over to an enemy port. 'Well do we remember, not perhaps without a blush, the efforts we made to raise him to the bench where now he sits, a man who . . . when he finds the wind in a particular quarter, trims his sails to suit it, such a man may be a powerful Minister but he is no more a great statesman than a man who gets up behind a carriage is a great whip.'

But the old Duke of Wellington backed Peel up. 'The Queen's Government must be carried on,' he argued as he had done twice before in the face of his party's anger; once over the Reform Bill and again over Catholic Emancipation; 'we have done all that we could for the landed interest, now we must do all that we can for the Queen.'

On the 16th May 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed. Two hundred and twenty-nine Tories voted against

the motion; three hundred and twenty-seven Peelites, Whigs, and Radicals voted in its favour.

That division was historic. Out of the majority there sprang a new party—the Liberal Party, which was to dominate English politics until the Treaty of Versailles. Out of the Bill a new economic conception took shape that was to hold sway in England until the crisis of 1931.

But Gladstone, who was destined to direct that party and to apply that policy for half a century, was not in the House on the night that they were born.

VI

The day the Corn Bill passed its Third Reading in the House of Lords the Government was defeated in the House of Commons. 'I am *hors de combat*', Peel told Gladstone. And indeed the poison of Disraeli's attack had entered his heart. 'I have been Prime Minister twice and nothing shall induce me again to take part in the formation of a Government. No one in the least degree knows what the work is. I have told the Queen that there is one thing she must not ask of me, to place myself again in the same position.'

Gladstone shared his depression. His leader, Robert Peel, had been broken by his own party. His mentor, Newman, had just succumbed to the violet aura of the Roman Church. The Tractarians were as divided and discomforted about ethics as the Conservatives were about politics. Even his family could not withstand the strain of so much false doctrine, heresy, and schism, and his father had been swift to publish 'his strong opinion of the injurious consequences that he dreaded from the stupendous [fiscal] experiment'. 'My father is so very keen in his protective opinions, I so very decidedly of the other way. . . . I look with reluctance and regret to what must place me in marked and public contrast with him.'

Renouncing all idea of re-entering the Parliament that was nearing its end with its fourth (Whig) Ministry in office, he went back to Cheshire to save Hawarden, which was just then threatened with a sale to pay for his father-in-law's coal-mining projects in the Midlands. There, among the meadows and the elm-trees, with Catherine at his side, time appeared to go with a kindly and gentle tread.

And all the time the new world that travelled by steam and sent telegrams went pounding on over the manners and traditions of the old. The middle classes were surging up from the new towns, their hands clutching substantial bank balances, their feet treading with equal pushfulness upon the heels of those above and the heads of those below. Their staid and sadder clothes were ousting the old gay colours. Black-stocked and bewhiskered under their chimney-pot hats, their menfolk led their busy little lives between God and mammon. Their spouses, strait-laced in every sense, sat on their horsehair chairs with skirts stiffened by a dozen petticoats, genteely draping their paisley shawls, genteely clasping their reticules, and genteely reading Mr. Thackeray's panegyrics of the domestic virtues of their kind.

It was Gladstone's world; it was not his world. He had been born into it; he had been bred out of it. He had very little affection for it; yet it was to become devoted to him. It was intolerant, it was narrow; it was ununderstanding; and with unfailing regularity by and large it was to vote Liberal.

The first chance to show its new power came with the general election in the July of 1847. Gladstone stood, but for no middle-class constituency. Oxford University was still impervious to the money standard, and to those who thought as Oxford thought the abstractions and the ideals of the young Peelite stood for the abiding truths in a world of changing values. 'If I had a vote I should

certainly give it to Mr. Gladstone', wrote one determined divine. 'He showed whether he was right or wrong, that he was an honest man, no disciple of expediency, that he really could distinguish between the temporary and the eternal, between that which is of Heaven and that which is of earth.'

His majority was 173. As the Oxford statisticians triumphantly announced, it was more than a matter of an odd hundred and seventy votes, for he could reckon on having polled:

25 double firsts;
 157 first-class honours;
 9 Ireland scholars;
 3 Hertford scholars;
 45 Chancellor's prizemen; and
 218 Fellows of colleges.

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Unnoticed by the prizemen and the double firsts, their minds stuffed with Puseyism and Maynoothism, a doctor of Edinburgh named Simpson had begun his final experiments on a new anaesthetic called chloroform.

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The House of Commons presented a novel spectacle. Wiseacres shook their heads to see three parties instead of two; for between the Protectionist Conservatives and the Free Trade Whigs there hovered a group of Free Trade Conservatives, led by Sir Robert Peel, which, in spite of the fact that its members were never united and that the loss of half its seats had reduced its numbers to a mere sixty, held the balance of power. 'We have no party, no organization and no whipper-in,' wrote Gladstone; 'and under these circumstances we cannot exercise any degree of permanent influence as a body.' But the Peelites could and did prevent the Protectionists

from setting back the fiscal clock. The Parliament to which Gladstone went back in 1847 was not unlike the Parliament of 1929. The Government of the day was maintained in office, but not in power, so long as it upheld Free Trade, but depending upon half-willing allies it could not pursue the positive measures in which it believed. Yet beneath the stagnant surface Gladstone could perceive that the tenets of party were 'shifting, equivocal, and fluid'.

The change in his own personal opinions was proceeding as steadily as ever. He had become an apostle of Freedom of Trade. He had supported the repeal of the Corn Laws. Now, logically, he found himself voting for the abolition of the Navigation Acts, which for three hundred years had reserved to British ships the monopoly of transporting British imports from Asia, Africa, and America. Logic carried him farther. He wanted to allow the Americans a share in the British coastal trade in return for reciprocity on their part. Logic, too, now carried him from Freedom of Trade on to Freedom of Thought, even at the price of reversing his earlier judgments. And he voted for the removal of the last disabilities on Roman Catholics and for the admission of Jews to Parliament. 'When I opposed the last law for the removal of Jewish disabilities,' he said, 'I foresaw that if we gave the Jew municipal, magisterial, and executive functions we could not refuse him legislative functions any longer. The Jew was refused admittance into the House because he would then be a maker of the laws. But who makes the maker of the law? The constituencies. And into those constituencies we have admitted the Jews.'

VII

He was becoming a Liberal though he did not yet avow it. And the change in him was encouraged by the gratifying improvement in the condition of England

that followed the repeal of the Corn Laws. Unemployment was falling; the standard of life was rising. Discontent and a perpetual lawlessness were yielding place before cheap food and regular work. Never had he spoken with greater conviction than when he proclaimed one day in 1848, that year of revolutions, that the best guarantee for national stability was Free Trade. And, look where one would, it seemed impossible to confute him.

The Chartist rebels were losing their hold. The last of their monster demonstrations failed to materialize on Kennington Common on the 10th April 1848, and Gladstone, who (along with the future Napoleon III) had offered his services as a special constable, escaped with 'duty from 2 to 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ p.m.'

And Free Trade England, it could not fail to be remarked, was enjoying a good fortune altogether peculiar to herself. Over the rest of Europe things were very different. There the age of steam-trains and Free Thought found an obscurantist mercantilism and the Divine Rights of Princes everywhere unyielding in its way. The result could only be an explosion; and the Continental Liberal had to reckon not in Blue books and ballots but in bullets and barricades.

Paris packed off its king, whiskers, umbrella, and all, and started a violent experiment in pure communism under the red flag.

German youth translated a romantic yearning after Freedom into a methodical demand for Constitutions and marched out in Student Free Corps to die under the black, red, and gold for a German Fatherland transcending the boundaries of all its princes.

The exasperated people of the imperial capital chased the Emperor Francis with old Metternich (watchdog of the established order) off to the icy comfort of the Tyrol.

The Hungarians marched out to fight a war for their Liberty.

And Italy had as many revolutions as she had States.

Nothing came of it all, save the slaughter of young men and young hopes. Paris and Vienna, Germany, Hungary, Italy, by turns they slipped back, almost with relief, to the stability of their old masters. And England, creeping tortoise-like ahead, increased her long lead in the race for the spoils of the nineteenth century.

But the old landmarks were being removed, even if they were slow to go, and Gladstone deeply felt the tragedy of their passing. On 29th June 1850 his great leader, Peel, was flung from his horse while riding down Constitution Hill. Three days after he was dead. And on the 3rd July 1850 it fell to Gladstone to second the motion to adjourn the House.

Now is the stately column broke,
The beacon light is quenched in smoke,
The trumpet's silver sound is still,
The warder silent on the hill.

Two of his closest friends, Hope and Manning, took Newman's road to Rome. 'They were my two props. Their going may be to me a sign that my work is gone with them. . . .'

His father had become more distant of late. It was hard for political differences not to affect family friendships in 1850, and old John Gladstone was reproaching him for becoming secretive. But old John Gladstone had taken 'a decided step, nay a stride, in old age'. He was become 'the very wreck of his powerful and simple nature', and 'mischief was at work on his brain'.

Among his own children also there was sickness, and in the autumn of 1850 Gladstone took what was to be a momentous step. To test the effect of the southern climate on his daughter's eyesight he took his family over to Naples. No spot on the map of Europe better illustrated the disastrous aftermath of the Liberal revolution. King Ferdinand (the people called him 'Bomba'), with his rout of priests, tax-gatherers, and

spies, had 'introduced a fear and corruption so great that nobody could trust his neighbour'. Two years before, the Liberals had wrung a Constitution out of him. Then, divided and undecided, over-hasty to erect barricades and over-dilatory to man them, they had been scattered by the King's Swiss mercenaries. Accordingly, when Gladstone reached Naples King Bomba was busy removing the last traces both of the Constitution and the Liberals.

Twenty thousand men and women, including seventy-six deputies out of a hundred and forty, were in prison for political offences. Fifty thousand more were under house arrest. Some were detained pending trial; some after acquittal. In the dungeons and on the penal islands politicals and criminals, condemned men and their accusers, were chained together. Convict secret societies batted on the terrorized prisoners. The criminals blackmailed, bullied, and knifed one another. Every conceivable vice raged uncontrolled. The cells were dripping and crawling, and eight out of fifty prisoners died of jail fever.

'Men become beasts descended to the utmost depths of degradation' (wrote one unhappy political prisoner). 'Time is like a shoreless sea, without sun or moon or stars, immense and monotonous. Three years—and if I have to say ten and twenty and thirty—I shall never say it—I shall not live so long.'

As soon as he arrived in Naples, Gladstone inevitably heard mention of the case of Carlo Poerio, a former Conservative Minister whose one crime was that he had tried to work the Constitution his master had granted. Poerio's trial was at that moment proceeding (it had been proceeding since the previous June and was to continue until the following February, though shortened by the fact that the prisoner was not allowed to bring

his witnesses into court). More fortunate than the witnesses, Gladstone obtained admission to the trial, and, sitting there on the public benches, was horrified to see the ways of Neapolitan procedure. Forged documents produced by the prosecution were 'reserved for further investigation'; suborned witnesses were shamelessly coached by the judges themselves. And when Poerio was finally condemned to twenty-four years in irons Gladstone was so moved that he went to seek him out in prison.

There he found 'the atmosphere was as thick as in a London fog, and human life in a living tomb assisting at the spectacle of its own decay'. He found 'the official doctors, not going to the sick prisoners, but the prisoners toiling upstairs to them because the lower regions of such a place of darkness are too foul and loathsome to allow it to be expected that professional men should earn bread by entering them'.

From the prison he passed on to the penal island of Nisida, where he discovered the prisoners 'had a heavy, limping movement, much as if one leg had been shorter than the other', and saw 'a political prisoner chained to an offender with the most sullen and ferocious countenance I have seen'.

Fresh from such sights, no man of sensibility could stay 'diving into volcanoes and exploring buried cities', nor 'look upon the picturesque and romantic forms of those lovely islands scattered along the coasts' without 'thinking what huge and festering masses of human suffering they conceal'. His being throbbled with indignation at the thought of so much suffering and injustice. Straight away he wrote a full account of everything to the Peelite leader, his friend and colleague, Lord Aberdeen.

'It is the wholesale persecution of virtue when united with intelligence. . . . It is the awful profanation of public religion. . . . It is the perfect prostitution

of the judicial office which has made it . . . the degraded recipient of the vilest and clumsiest forgeries. . . . It is the savage and cowardly system of moral as well as physical torture . . . this is the negation of God erected into a system of government.'

His pen ran steeped in the white fire of righteous indignation.

Lord Aberdeen was embarrassed. His followers had in the nature of things supported the cause of established order in Europe, and to publish Gladstone's letter would put a dangerous weapon into the hand of their enemies. He tried to save a public scandal by an appeal in private to the Austrian Government to use its influence with King Ferdinand to mitigate the severity of his measures. But the Austrians were slow to answer and slower still to act, and in July 1851 Gladstone, grown impatient, published his letter to the world.

All England was electrified. The Press backed him with one voice. Three-quarters of the Conservatives and all the Liberals were on his side. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, sent copies of the letter to British representatives at all the Courts of Europe, with instructions to present them to the Governments, and took care to tell the Neapolitan envoy that his reply was 'a flimsy tissue of bare assertions mixed up with coarse ribaldry and commonplace abuse'. Public opinion, profoundly stirred, was quick to follow the clear lead given it by the great English Conservative. Everywhere the name of Naples became the symbol of oppression and corruption. From that day the apostles of Italian unity were able to work with the consciousness that the feeling of the age was with them.

Italy, what of the night?
O! Child, child it is long.
Moonbeam and starbeam and song
Leave it full now and dark.

Yet I perceive on the height
Eastward not very far,
A song too loud for the lark,
A light too bright for the star.

It was all very well for King Ferdinand to load more chains on Poerio and to redouble his native informers and foreign mercenaries, and for his jackals to tell 'lord Gladston' that 'the English sell their wives with ropes round their necks for a few pences and then have the impertinence to complain about little trials in Naples'; but the Gladstone letters had done their work, and the Throne of the Two Sicilies was doomed on the day when they appeared. Thirteen years after, when King Bomba's throne was empty and his kingdom had ceased to exist, Garibaldi, meeting Gladstone for the first time, uttered the single word '*Précurseur!*'

VIII

Actually, Garibaldi's rhetoric, however well it sounded in 1864, was very far from the truth in 1851. 'The purely abstract idea of Italian unity', Gladstone said, 'makes little impression and finds limited sympathy among ourselves. I am certain that the Italian habit of preaching Unity and Nationality in preference to showing grievances produces a revulsion here.' Like the typical Englishman that he was, Gladstone had been stirred by the stark ugliness of what he had seen in Naples. He had never wasted a thought on the theories of Italian unity. In the same way his fellow-countrymen had responded to his appeal not as crusaders in the cause of philosophic freedom but as good Protestants shocked by one more example of Popish wickedness. For it was not to be denied that the Catholic Church was the mainstay of Bomba's system and that he had no better spies than its confessors.

'If there are two things on earth that John Bull hates they are an abstract proposition and the Pope.'

The Neapolitan horrors were made known to England precisely when a violent anti-Catholic spasm happened to be shaking the land. Pope Pius IX had been impressed by the conversions of Newman, Manning, Hope, and their friends, and by the progress of the Tractarians in England. He was convinced that theirs was the beginning of a wholesale movement of Englishmen back to the bosom of the Catholic Church. As the Vicar of God, it was his bounden duty to comfort the swelling army of the faithful. Accordingly, he issued a Bull, 'given at St. Peter's, Rome, under the seal of the fisherman', to set up in Britain 'a hierarchy of Bishops, deriving their titles from their own sees which we constitute by the present letter in the various Apostolic Districts'. There were to be twelve Suffragans and one Archbishop—of Westminster—who was to become Administrator Apostolic.

The Pope's first Archbishop, Cardinal Wiseman, issued 'out of the Flaminian Gate' a pastoral letter to the English people. 'Your beloved country has received a place among the fair churches which form the splendid aggregate of Catholic communion. Catholic England has been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament from which its light had long vanished. . . .'

Anti-Popery leapt forward to accept the challenge. There had been no cardinal in England since the days of Bloody Mary. The very name brought back the reek of Smithfield faggots. Englishmen were infuriated that a foreign power should assume the right to grant English titles and incensed to be told that they were 'resuming their place in an ecclesiastical system' which they cordially detested.

On Guy Fawkes' day, Pope Pius and his cardinal took the place of the regulations guys. A Wiseman sixteen feet high in scarlet cap and robes was dragged down

Fleet Street and burned with wild applause under Temple Bar.

Your Popish Plot and Smithfield threat
We do not fear at all.
For see, beneath Queen Bess's feet,
You fall, you fall, you fall!

Two hundred people marched round Exeter Cathedral decked as popes, cardinals, and inquisitors brandishing racks and thumbscrews.

Seven thousand protest meetings were held, and the Queen was deluged with addresses of loyalty.

Lord Truro, the Lord Chancellor, at the Lord Mayor's banquet four days later, drew rounds of applause by quoting Shakespeare's words:

Under my feet I'll stamp thy Cardinal's hat in spite of Pope or dignities of Church.

And when Charles Kean, as King John, at Drury Lane, proclaimed:

'No Italian priest shall tithe or toll in our dominion', the whole audience rose to its feet and cheered.

The Government could not ignore such an outcry. Lord John Russell, the Liberal leader, in an open letter to the Bishop of Durham, said: .

'The liberty of Protestantism has been enjoyed too long in England to allow of any successful attempt to impose a foreign yoke upon men's minds and consciences. But there is a danger that alarms me more, the danger from within the gates, from the unworthy sons of the Church of England herself. What means the honour paid to saints? The claim to infallibility for the Church? The recommendation of auricular confession? And the administration of penance and absolution? I have little hope that the propounders and framers of these innovations will desist from their insidious course, but I rely with confidence on the

people of England and I will not bate one jot of heart or hope so long as the glorious principles and the immortal martyrs of the Reformation shall be held in reverence by the great mass of the Nation which looks with contempt on the mummeries of superstition and with scorn on the laborious endeavours which are now making to confine the intellect and enslave the soul.'

When Parliament met in the spring of 1851 Lord John introduced a Bill to 'Prevent the assumption by Roman Catholics of any titles taken from places in the United Kingdom' under a penalty of £100, and to render void 'all acts done by or bequests made to persons under such a title'.

'Was it for this,' asked Mr. Disraeli, the facile and somewhat theatrical hope of the extreme Tories, 'that the Lord Chancellor trampled on a cardinal's hat amid the patriotic acclamations of the Metropolitan municipality?'

Mr. John Bright denounced the Bill as 'little, paltry, and miserable'.

Mr. Roebuck called it 'the meanest, pettiest, and most futile measure that ever-disgraced even bigotry itself'.

'I suspect John Russell has more rocks and breakers ahead than he reckoned upon when he dipped his pen in gall to smite . . . those who not being Papists are such traitors and fools as really to mean something when they say, "I believe in one holy Catholic Church"', Gladstone had written, and it was on Gladstone that all eyes were now turned.

On the Second Reading of the Bill (25th March 1851) Gladstone faced a House that was almost solidly against him. In one of the greatest speeches of his whole career he pleaded for the spirit of religious liberty and religious tolerance.

'The principle of religious freedom . . . you did not

adopt in haste. It was . . . well tried in struggle and conflict. It ultimately triumphed after you had spent upon it half a century of agonizing struggle. Are you going to spend the decay and the dust of the nineteenth century undoing the work which your greatest men have been achieving during its daybreak and its youth? . . . Europe and the civilized world look to England. They know that when you make a step forward you keep it . . . that you are not a monarchy to-day, a republic to-morrow, and a military despotism the day after. . . . That you have been happily preserved from irrational vicissitudes that mark the greatest and noblest among the neighbouring nations. Do not forfeit it. Show the Pope of Rome, his cardinals, and his church that England too has her *semper eadem*, and that when she has once adopted some great principle of legislation, and done it deliberately, she has done it once for all and will no more retrace her steps than the river that bathes this giant city can flow back upon its source.'

The Bill passed by 395 votes to 63, and Gladstone was defeated. But time was to vindicate him. The Government quickly found themselves in a quandary. To apply their measure to Ireland meant reversing Catholic Emancipation as well, as provoking a revolution; to exempt Ireland from its provisions was illogical and invidious. Accordingly, a compromise was reached, and the Bill, shorn of its penal clauses, passed into law. There it remained, a dead letter on the Statute Book for twenty years, until Gladstone took it off again.

The May of 1851 was the month of the Great Exhibition. As Mr. Paxton's structure of glass and iron rose round the elms in Hyde Park it seemed as if it were the visible manifestation of the new Liberalism enveloping all the peoples of the world. Conservative elements in the country disapproved the whimsical project of the foreign-born Prince Consort.

'In the defence of Hyde Park against the threatened mischief of the gigantic baby with which Free Trade is to bless us, we hope . . . a firm stand will be made' (said the *Morning Post*). 'The strongest minds may lose the reins of judgment when run away with by a hobby. With every respect for the originators or inventors of the costly toy called the Exhibition of All Nations . . . the state of their minds is such as to demand wholesome restraint.'

People shuddered at the thought of a London laid open to the invasion of a host of foreign strangers, reds and revolutionaries, Catholics, and carriers of the cholera.

Colonel Sibthorpe uttered direful warnings in the House of Commons. 'When Free Trade has left nothing else needed to complete the ruin of the nation, the enemy of mankind has inspired us with the idea of the Great Exhibition so that the foreigners who have robbed us of our trade may now be enabled to rob us of our honour. Take care of your wives and daughters! Take care of your property and your lives!' The honourable and gallant member prayed that hail and lightning might descend from Heaven on the accursed thing. And Nonconformist Ministers declared it 'an arrogant and wicked enterprise which would infallibly bring down God's punishment upon the nation'.

'The opponents of the Exhibition' (wrote the Prince Consort) 'work with might and main to throw all the old women here into a panic and to drive myself crazy. The strangers, they give out, are certain to murder Victoria and myself and to proclaim the red republic in England. The plague is certain to ensue from the confluence of such multitudes.'

But the Prince Consort had rightly gauged the trend of the time; and Gladstone could see his own new

political philosophy vindicated before his wondering eyes. In it, he saw 'a great work of peace on earth, not of that merely diplomatic peace which bristles with the apparatus and establishments of war on a scale far beyond what was formerly required, it was a more stable peace, founded on social and mental unison which the Exhibition tended to consolidate'.

The Crystal Palace marked a revolutionary use of new materials in building; its contents displayed a new era, resting no longer on the inheritance of splendid acres and the rule of ancient dynasties, but on the products of energy and thrift and the free exchange of manufactured goods.

For the first time since Duke William's Norman knights had clanked up the aisles of Westminster, London looked on great numbers of men and women with speech and outlook different from its own. They came from Europe and Asia and America, they came wearing their quaint and brightly coloured national dresses that have long since passed away: Chinamen with pigtails and flowing silks, bearded Turks in their baggy trousers, Indians in towering turbans, and Yankees in frock coats and wide-awake hats. They told strange stories of seraglios by the Golden Horn and diggings by the Golden Gate; of junks and tea-gardens lit with a thousand lanterns; of elephants and idols set in swaying palm-groves. They admired the scarlet-draped stalls heaped with cottons and calicoes from Lancashire, Yorkshire woollens, and Staffordshire hardware. They mingled with the stream of humanity that wandered wide-eyed from city and shire around the beautiful glass fountain in the central hall. They trudged off dutifully of a morning to hear Mr. Thackeray's lecture on the English humorists and Fanny Kemble's reading from Shakespeare. They trooped off gaily of an evening to hear Sontag sing and watch Grisi dance at 'His Majesty's', and to see the horses at Astley's, and visit London's twenty panoramas of Oregon and

California, of the Lisbon earthquake and Paris by night. Tired but happy they rested at last in Gore House Gardens and ate M. Soyer's excellent dinners under the gas lamps that hung among the plane-trees.

And when they said their good-byes at last, England was an island no longer and would never be one again.

IX

In February 1852 the Whigs fell, Lord Derby formed a Conservative Ministry, and Mr. Disraeli kissed hands as Chancellor of the Exchequer. There was a general election that July, and, notwithstanding the opposition of many of the dons and most of the clergy, shocked by the growing liberality of his opinions about the rights of Catholics and Jews, the University returned Gladstone by an increased majority.

Gladstone remained a Peelite. He had not officially left the Conservative Party, he was even sounded that November to see if he would join the Government. It was in fact the decisive moment of his life. If he chose to take the offer his past aberrations would readily be forgiven, but that would mean abandoning his firm belief in Free Trade and in Liberty of Opinion. It meant deserting the philosophy of the Great Exhibition for the philosophy of Colonel Sibthorpe. But it would assure him of a ready-made future in the party in which he had grown up, which knew him and which he knew.

The alternative was a plungé into the unknown. Only Liberalism would be left him. For it was clear that in the long run there was no room for a Peelite third party. Liberalism stood for the liberty that he believed in and for Free Trade; but it was opposed to his High Church faith, it laughed at his reverence for authority, it ignored his attachment to tradition, and it espoused the dangerous doctrines of Reform.

Still, in the way of Conservatism stood the stumbling-

block of Protection; and because of Protection he declined the offer. 'I cannot make out Gladstone, who seems to me a dark horse', said Lord Malmesbury, the new Foreign Secretary. But really Gladstone's decision was not hard to understand. He still believed that there was a possibility of rebuilding the Conservative Party once they had dropped the Protectionist issue. 'I wished to be on the liberal side of the Conservative Party,' he said, 'rather than on the conservative side of the Liberal Party.'

And there was one more obstacle—Mr. Disraeli, the subtle, volatile, and fascinating Jew, now leader of the Conservatives in the House of Commons. Mr. Disraeli's bitter attack had, he was sure, broken the heart of his old friend Robert Peel. Peel was dead only two years; but even had it been twenty, Gladstone could not have forgiven—or trusted—his assassin.

That very month when Gladstone declined to join the Ministers, Mr. Disraeli brought in his Budget. Glib, smooth, theatrical, with his polished manner and polished hair, bedizened with gold watch-chains and gold rings, the man who had undertaken to conduct the Conservative Party to the promised land stood at the dispatch-box. His vast promises of succour for British agriculture had, it appeared, crystallized into the taking off of the duty on malt (to be made good by doubling the tax on inhabited houses); but he made it seem the magnificent gesture of a Solomon at his most glorious. Mr. Disraeli could do such things. Had he not just moved the House to tears with a funeral oration on the old Duke of Wellington (half of it taken word for word, Mr. Greville remarked, from a panegyric by Thiers on Marshal de St. Cyr)?

With forceful invective and in biting phrases the Chancellor of the Exchequer fought every inch of the way. Like a fencer facing a ring of adversaries the blade of his eloquence flashed here and there, now thrusting,

now parrying. At 10.20 on the evening of 16th December 1852 he began his final speech:

'Sir, at this late hour I will not enter . . . any elaborate argument on the effect . . . of modification of the malt tax. . . .

'I am told if you reduce the tax on the consumer on one article to the extent of £2½ million . . . we shall not affect price . . . all the reduction will go to the brewer.'

He drew himself up and fronted the Peelites, his mind gliding on to his old theme, Peel's treachery in repealing the Corn Laws.

'Sir, I remember when we used to discuss the effect of taxation on another article, that similar observations were made. I do not care now to remember from what quarter they emanated, but the effect and object of those observations were exactly the same. Then it was, "Oh! those villains, the bakers!" just as now it is to be "Those villains, the brewers!" You might reduce the price of corn—you might injure the agricultural interest—you might ruin the farmers and the country gentlemen—but you could not reduce the price of the loaf to the consumer. No; the bakers took it all. Yes—and there were the millers too. The millers were the worst of all—they carried off all the reduction. Well, those arguments had a considerable effect, and there was such a prejudice raised against the bakers throughout the country, that I should not have been surprised if they had been all hanged in one day, as the bakers had once been in Constantinople. At that time it used to be shown that a fall of ten shillings a quarter on wheat would not affect the price of bread; and we were told that the bakers then, like the brewers now, were a great monopoly—if not great capitalists—they were a kind of Freemasons; and, do what you would, it would be totally impossible in any way ever to get a cheap loaf. And now—such are the vicissitudes of political life—now we

hear the same argument from those gentlemen who used to dilate so eloquently on the necessity of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market. The great friends of the consumer—the enemies of colossal monopolies—here we find them all arrayed in favour of high taxation for the producer, and here we find them, with taunts to us, teaching all the fallacies which we at least have had the courage honourably to give up. Tell me Protection is dead! Tell me there is no Protectionist Party in the country! Why, 'tis rampant, and 'tis there! They have taken up our principles with our benches, and I believe they will be quite as unsuccessful.'

Such phrases cut to the quick. 'I was on tenterhooks,' says Gladstone, 'except when his superlative acting and brilliant oratory . . . made me quite forget that I had to follow. His speech was grand, I think the most powerful I ever heard from him.'

'I have been told to withdraw my Budget,' snarled the sallow Minister. 'I remember a Budget withdrawn and re-withdrawn again in 1848.' (That eternal attack on Peel!) 'What was the consequence of that Government thus existing upon sufferance? Why, that injurious, unjust, and ignoble commutation of the House Duty which now I am obliged to remedy.'

Still, in the pale light and in the stale air, the orator went on. One o'clock boomed from Big Ben as he lashed himself to his climax.

'I know what I have to face.' And his eyes wandered from the Peelites to the 'Liberals opposite and back from the Liberals to the Peelites again. 'Yes, I know what I have to face. I have to face a coalition. The combination may be successful. A coalition has before this been successful. But coalitions, although successful, have always found this, that their triumph has been brief. This too I know, that England does not love coalitions. I appeal from the coalition to that public opinion which governs this country—to that public

opinion whose mild and irresistible influence can control even the decrees of Parliaments, and without whose support the most august and ancient institutions are but "the baseless fabric of a vision".'

When the cheers had spluttered out a hush fell upon the House. Slowly and deliberately Gladstone took his stand.

'I am . . . reluctant . . . to trespass upon the attention of the Committee, but I begin by telling the right honourable gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer that whether he knows business or not, there are some things which he has yet to learn. . . . The licence of the language he has used, the phrases he has applied to the characters of public men, I confess I could not hear and remain totally unmoved.' The words were drowned in tumultuous cheering from the Liberals and Peelites. But the Tories interrupted. 'Notwithstanding the efforts of gentlemen who avail themselves of darkness to interrupt me . . . they must bear to have their Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is so free in his commitments on the conduct of others, tried by the laws of decency and propriety.'

The speaker's striking eyes swept the green benches, where, here and there, the pallor of a face peered out of the gloom. He spoke with a subdued earnestness, and his hearers caught the sound as though he were communing with himself. The harsh north country burr, which obtruded itself now and then into his speech, he seemed to smooth away with the rhythmic gestures of his hands. His oval face, with its dark and prominent eyebrows, framed in its mass of closely cut black hair, seemed to suggest a being newly come out of some more ethereal sphere to take up the challenge which Mr. Disraeli had so adroitly issued.

'Fivepence is the present price of a quart of beer. Twopence is the cost price of it. Three farthings is the duty. Twopence farthing is the effect of the double

monopoly of the brewers and of the malt tax. Half of three farthings is the amount of the reduction on a quart of beer. What is now fivepence will hereafter be four and five-eighths pence. That is the reduction for which we are called on to surrender two and a half million pounds of public revenue. . . .

‘The Chancellor of the Exchequer is become a pupil of Free Trade and is now going to legislate on the principles of Free Trade. One main consideration in the reduction of a duty is the way it will stimulate the self-reproducing powers of the revenue. I want to know how the five million pounds he now receives from malt are to be reproduced?’

As a Peelite he had been challenged; as a Peelite he made answer.

‘Us you have cast off for inconsistency. You also have a character to maintain. You also are on your trial. Are you not the party who in times of difficulty chose to provide a large surplus? Are you . . . in times of prosperity to convert a large surplus into a deficiency? You are asked to vote for a Budget which consecrates the principle of a deficiency, which endangers the public credit, which may imperil our safety. You may refuse my appeal now, but if you give your assent and your high authority to this most unsound and destructive principle, you will look back upon this vote with bitter but ineffectual regret.’

With a superb peroration he discharged his last broadside into the now riddled proposals of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

‘The Budget is one, I will not say the most Liberal, nor the most Radical, but I will say the most subversive in its tendencies and ultimate effects which I have ever known submitted to this House. It is the most regardless of those general rules of prudence which it is absolutely necessary we should preserve, and which it is perfectly impossible that this House, as a popular assembly, should

observe unless the Government sets us the example, and uses its influence to keep us in the right course.'

At four o'clock in the morning, with a thunderstorm hissing over St. Stephen's and rain lashing the windows of the Chamber, the House divided. There was an immense crowd. A deafening cheer greeted the tellers when they came forward. There had voted:

For the Government	286
Against	305

Gladstone had defeated the Conservative Party and now his future was clear. Mr. Disraeli looked out on to the wet, grey pavement beyond Westminster Hall. 'It will be an unpleasant day for going to Osborne', he said.

X

A Conservative had brought a Conservative Government down. A wave of bitterness against Gladstone swept through those London drawing-rooms and Oxford common rooms which considered him a traitor to his class and creed. 'Twenty ruffians of the Carlton Club,' noted Greville, 'when they got drunk, went upstairs and finding Gladstone alone in the drawing-room some of them proposed to throw him out of the window. This they did not quite dare to do, but contented themselves with giving some insulting message to the waiter and then went away.'

Early in 1853 Lord Aberdeen formed a National Government of the Left. In the Cabinet there were seven Liberals and six Peelites; of the big offices outside three were Peelite and one Liberal.

In the House of Commons the administration could command the support of two hundred and seventy Liberals, thirty Peelites, and thirty Irish. Gladstone, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer, said, 'It may be thought that the Liberals whose party is to supply

five-sixths of our supporters have less than their due share of power, but it should be borne in mind that they have the character of so far a discredited party. Whereas we have been for six and a half years out of office and have upon us a gloss of freshness.'

'The position which we desire to see England occupy,' said the new Prime Minister, 'among the nations of Europe, is to act the part of a moderator and by reconciling differences and removing misunderstandings to preserve harmony and peace.'

On taking office, Gladstone had to be re-elected at a by-election at Oxford. His opponents played on the fears of the country clergymen with tales of his secession to the Scottish Presbyterian Church; his mysterious intimacy with Cardinal Wiseman; his incitements to the Pope to persecute Protestants at Florence; and that he no longer took Communion. But in the end he came back again with a majority of 124. It was a vote of confidence in the new Liberalism from the most unlikely of all constituencies.

So Gladstone came to No. 11 Downing Street. Mr. Disraeli, the outgoing tenant, even at this eleventh hour, contrived to make his presence obtrude. They started a quarrel about valuing the fittings and furniture and also the full-dress robe worn by Chancellors of the Exchequer on ceremonial occasions. So the two greatest financial brains in contemporary England began to grapple over a matter of shillings. Gladstone drafted a vital letter 'on a Sunday, being I suppose the day most favourable to self-control'; only to be advised by his predecessor to consult a third party 'who is at least a man of the world'.

It was all very well for Mr. Disraeli to be sarcastic, but he could not keep Gladstone out of his robe or his office either, and he had brought back the finance of the hated Peel. His Budget that year (1853) was the final triumph of Free Trade. One hundred and forty

duties were abolished. One hundred and fifty were lowered. The tea duty was halved. The duty on soap was removed. To make up for this loss of revenue, Peel's income tax was to be retained for seven years—for two years at sevenpence in the pound; for two years at sixpence; and for three years at fivepence. By that time it was hoped that Parliament would do away with it. A new tax on inherited land was imposed. It was significant and disturbing. For it was the first blow that had been struck by taxation at the mighty landed order. And, as Morley says, 'It secured for its author the lasting resentment of a powerful class'.

When it was passed it represented a personal triumph for Gladstone. Before ever he rose to introduce it, in the House, he had had to face an unconvinced Cabinet. It took him three hours to bring them round. 'Perfectly just and admirably put together,' said Palmerston, when he had finished, 'but it opens too many points of attack; it never can be carried.'

Lord John Russell 'perceived difficulties'.

Graham thought 'it might be safer to take away only half the soap tax'.

'We shall be beaten,' said Palmerston again.

'Be of good cheer,' said Graham; 'it is an excellent Budget to dissolve upon.'

'It will gain us forty seats,' admitted Lord John.

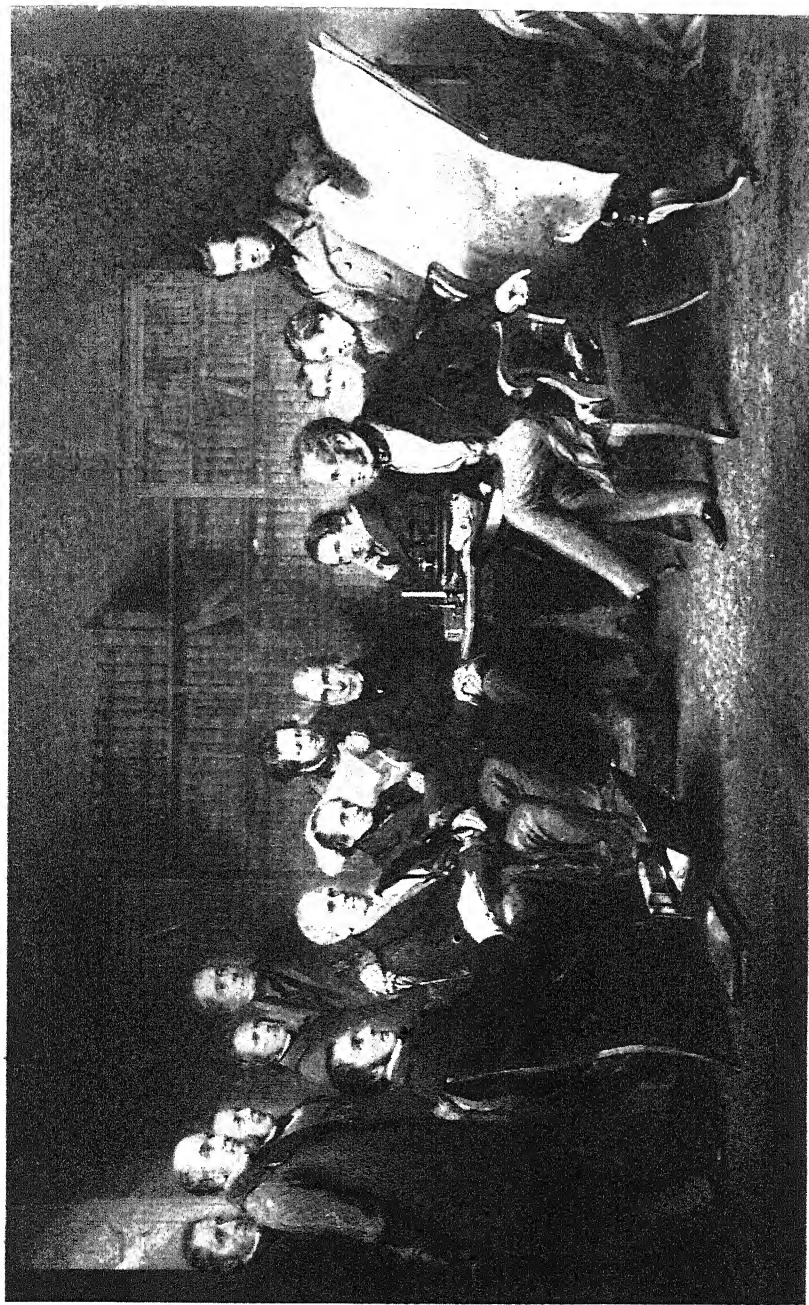
'But,' said Graham, 'it will never do to play that trump card until the state of the game requires it.'

'I'm no judge of figures,' admitted Lord John.

'But the best judge living of House of Commons tactics,' retorted Graham.

For nearly five hours on the 18th April Ministers sat in trepidation while Gladstone addressed the House. When he sat down the Budget was through.

'Mr. Pitt in his glory may have been more imposing, but he could not have been more persuasive', said Lord John Russell in a burst of enthusiastic gratitude.



THE MINISTRY OF ALL THE TALENTS, 1854
From the Painting by John Gilbert, engraved by Walker

'I should certainly have cheered had I a seat in the House', Prince Albert wrote to him. ' . . . trusting that your Christian humility will not allow you to be dangerously elated.'

While Greville noted in his diary: 'The Budget speech has given the country assurance of a man fit to lead parties and direct governments.'

And to Lady Peel Gladstone wrote: 'I will not scruple to say I was inspired by the thought of treading however unequally in the steps of my great teacher and master in public affairs.'

XI

When Lord Aberdeen said that he desired to see England, under his guidance, preserving 'harmony and peace', he certainly meant it. But Liberal Governments in England have a habit of unexpectedly finding themselves engaged in a war on behalf of a foreign power.

All through 1852 the country had simmered with excitement and uneasiness. The French Republic was lately replaced by a Dictator—and that Dictator a Bonaparte. France was re-arming. She denounced the Peace Treaty of 1815. Her young men were trying on new uniforms, singing patriotic songs in chorus, and marching up and down the streets in gangs while Europe looked on uncomfortably.

England, in face of this growing menace, took stock and found herself unready. There was an outburst of patriotic activity from the upper and middle classes. Bewhiskered gentlemen emerged from their stucco houses in frogged jackets and learnt to form fours in Hyde Park. Post Office Rifles competed with Artists Rifles and every other conceivable brand of Rifles in marksmanship and squad drill. The Volunteer Movement sprang into being, whipping up a nation of

shopkeepers into a martial patriotism as Mr. Tennyson bade them:

Let your reforms for a moment go;
 Look to your butts and take good aims.
 Better a rotten Borough or so,
 Than a rotten Fleet and a city in flames.
 Storm! Storm! Riflemen form!
 Ready, be ready against the storm!
 Riflemen! Riflemen!! Riflemen!!! form!

But it turned out that Napoleon III's ambitions lay to the East and not to the West. In 1853 the Tsar found an excuse to occupy the demilitarized area of the Turkish Empire on the Danube, and by the autumn Tsar and Sultan were at war.

Napoleon, anxious to consolidate his rule at home by a war abroad, and to show that the Third Empire was a force to be reckoned with in European politics, threw in his lot with the Turks.

It was enough to crystallize the aggressive spirit that the Volunteer Movement had fanned in England. The War Party had many grounds for fearing Russia, chief among them the fact that the eastward drive which had just taken place upon the Danube had long been sensed on the north-west frontier of India. Above all, the idea of war was popular. It was a reaction against materialist doctrines of commercial prosperity, which had held sway since Waterloo. 'The public had grown impatient of the common saying that England had joined the Peace Society and would never fight again.'

. . . So I wake to the higher aims

Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold
 And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames.

For the peace that I deem no peace is over and done,
 And now by the side of the Black and Baltic deep
 And deathful grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
 The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire,

Mr. Tennyson explained. Public feeling was worked upon by tales of Russian atrocities and fearsome stories of bearded Scythian hordes. So in March 1854 there were plenty of Jingo crowds to

Cheer! boys, cheer!
That all the world may hear,
For our soldier and our sailor lads afar.
May God His mercy send them
And Heaven itself defend them
And send them back in triumph from the war,

and the Crimean War had begun.

Gladstone, officially at any rate, approved the venture. Several times in after years he wrote in defence of it unconvincing essays and letters, probably undertaken to persuade himself. 'Mechanically and without enthusiasm', he followed a leader who had been finally overborne in Cabinet. Nevertheless, he stuck to his office at the Exchequer, and immediately after the declaration of war he introduced his war-time Budget. The income tax was doubled and fixed at the appalling figure of 1s. 2d. in the pound; extra duties were levied on spirits, sugar, and malt. It was a staggering prospect for the country, and the House of Commons was aghast. In the City of London it was said that Gladstone's financial reputation was gone. The great Pitt had always financed his wars out of loans, leaving to posterity the burden of paying them off. But in Gladstone's opinion 'the system of raising funds necessary for wars by loan practises wholesale, systematic, and continual deception upon the people'. He elaborated his point by looking back twenty years to the evil outcome of Pitt's finance. 'When in years of war, say £20 million annually are provided by loan, then two consequences follow. An immense factitious stimulus is given to labour at the time and thus much more labour is brought into the market. When that stimulus is withdrawn, an augmented quantity of labour is left to compete in the market with

a greatly diminished quantity of capital. Here is the story of the misery of great masses of the English people in the years after 1815.'

Thus the Government's war finance remained essentially sound. Unfortunately, other departments of the administration were neither so methodical nor yet so competent. If Gladstone would not have Pitt's finance, the War Office insisted on Pitt's strategy. His expedition had perished of the swamp fever in Walcheren; theirs was sent to rot in Varna of the cholera. The Peninsular veteran now in command (throughout the campaign he never broke himself of the habit of referring to the enemy as 'the French') saw no change, save in the head-dress of the light dragoons and the shako of the regiments of foot, since the day when he had watched the French skirmishers moving through the vineyards at Torres Vedras.

That autumn the British Expeditionary Force was shifted from Bulgaria to the Crimea, so as to strike at the Russian fortress of Sebastopol, the base of operations in the Black Sea, against Constantinople. 'The first difficulty is the absence of all information as to the Crimea itself', wrote Prince Albert. In Paris they consulted the ghost of the great Napoleon by means of a planchette; carefully studied their only available data, two sketches of the locality by a lithographer who had visited it five years before; and dug Jomini, the seventy-five-year-old writer of tactical text-books who had been with Ney at Austerlitz, out of an arm-chair at the Café Anglais, where he stigmatized the project as 'disastrous'.

Lord Aberdeen's Cabinet, however, saw from the map that the Crimea was a peninsula, and deduced that the British Fleet must be able to cut it off by sweeping the isthmus with its guns. They did not see that the water at the isthmus was only two feet deep.

Accordingly, the Allies landed thirty miles from Sebastopol. By an oversight the British transport animals had been left behind, and there were no carts.

Forcing the passage of the Alma River, the troops marched elaborately right round Sebastopol until they met their fleet again at Balaclava. But between the trenches on the heights of Balaclava and the beach below there was no road, only a slough of clay through which all supplies had to be carried by hand. In the British Army 17,000 out of the 25,000 were ill with disease, so the survivors had to man the trenches by day and carry up supplies at night.

The tents leaked and the men slept in puddles. As there were no changes of clothes, every one had to fight in his wet uniform. The men had to find what fuel they could, so there was not much prospect of drying them.

Coffee there was; but in the absence of fuel to roast it, mills to grind it and kettles to make it the Commissary-General consoled himself that 'the soldiers will no doubt find some means of overcoming any difficulty that may arise from the want'.

Soon the Army was racked with scurvy. There were no fresh vegetables, and when a cargo of cabbages came from England no one would take the responsibility of signing for them, so they were left to rot in the ship.

That winter all organization collapsed. The wounded had to be carried down to the beach at Balaclava and left there in the open (with a Crimea winter raging) until there was room for them on the transports to the hospital at Scutari. At Balaclava itself there were no facilities of any kind. And to Scutari it was a two days' journey by water, which was not unsuitably compared to the 'Middle Passage' of the old slavers. Nine men in every hundred it was reckoned died before they got there.

Even at Scutari 'there were no basins, no towels, no soap, no brooms, no mops, no trays, no plates; there were neither slippers nor scissors, neither shoe-brushes nor blacking; there were no knives or forks or spoons'. The canvas sheets frightened the wounded men so much that they begged to be left in their blankets; and until

Miss Florence Nightingale came out in November (1854) only six shirts had been washed.

So 40 per cent of the men before Sebastopol died; and the total British casualties were equal to the size of the original expedition.

Something of the true state of affairs in the Crimea at last began to percolate through the complacent patriotism of the English people, chiefly through the dispatches of *The Times* representative and other such 'low and grovelling war correspondents', as officialdom called them. In January 1855, like a sea-gull fleeing before an advancing storm, Lord John Russell, the Liberal leader, resigned. Almost immediately, Mr. Roebuck from the Radical benches moved for a Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of the War.

Gladstone was put up to resist it. He spoke with dutiful vigour if not with conviction. His voice was 'clear and flexible', wrote a journalist; 'it was minute dissection without bitterness or ill-humoured innuendo'.

'Your Inquiry,' he told the House, 'would lead to confusion and disturbance, shame at home and weakness abroad. . . . It would carry malignant joy to the enemies of England and . . . I . . . shall ever rejoice . . . that my own last words as a member of the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen . . . have been words of protest . . . against a proceeding . . . which is useless and mischievous . . . and in my judgment . . . full of danger to the power, dignity, and usefulness of the Commons of England.'

It was a specious argument. For the state of affairs in the Crimea the Government had to bear full responsibility. By remaining in the Government, Gladstone had implied his confidence in its conduct of the war. Now, in face of the Roebuck motion he was trapped: it was too late to escape as Lord John Russell had done. He was reaping, and he knew it, the fruit of his indecisive conduct of the past year.

His eloquence, on this occasion, miscarried, and the Government was defeated by 325 votes to 148.

So in the middle of the war the country was without a Government and there was a frantic scurrying to patch up another. Eventually Lord Palmerston emerged at the head of yet another Peelite-Liberal coalition. This Coalition included Gladstone, but not for long. When the Prime Minister with his acute parliamentary sense announced that he would accept the motion for the Committee of Inquiry, Gladstone at once resigned.

He was with the Queen for about twenty minutes at the handing over of the seals. 'I receive them with great pain', she said. She spoke of the difficulty of carrying on the Government in the confused state of things. 'I frankly gave my opinion to Her Majesty that she would have little peace or comfort until Parliament should have returned to two political parties.'

And now, for the first time, he knew what it was to be unpopular. People were indignant over the war, and he was held responsible for its mismanagement. A Committee had been demanded and he had resisted it. He had gone out with the Government, and had slipped back with its traducers. Then within a few weeks he had resigned again rather than face the Committee.

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The war went on. That spring the state of the Army improved. A new paved road linked Balaclava with the heights. There was even a makeshift railway. And Miss Nightingale had evolved system out of chaos at Scutari. A new invention, too, had revolutionized the conduct of the operations. The electric telegraph reduced the time of transit of information from ten days to twenty-four hours, and the Peninsular generals hardly knew what to make of it. From 4 a.m. to 6 p.m. the Commander-in-Chief was battling with a shower of advice, instructions, suggestions, and inquiries. 'Did he

think beards an aid to desertion? And had Captain Jervis really been bitten by a centipede?"

"The electric telegraph has upset everything," he feelingly remarked.

Russia now was in a frame of mind to negotiate. England, under Lord Palmerston's leadership, was thoroughly Jingo. Only a small minority under the leadership of Cobden and Bright constituted a Peace Party. But to this party, Gladstone joined himself. In the House he spoke fervently and with a greater sincerity than at any period during the war in favour of a negotiated peace. 'Would it not', he argued, 'have been the most contemptible effeminacy of character if a man in my position, who feels he has been instrumental in bringing his country into this struggle, were he to hesitate a single moment when he was firmly convinced that the time had arrived when we might with honour escape from it?' This course merely increased his unpopularity, and for the moment his influence was certainly gone. The patriotic Press described his speeches as a mixture of pious grimace and vindictive howl, savage curses and dolorous forebodings, the most unpatriotic ever heard in Parliament. Against the outcry he fortified himself by reading classic philosophy and bore himself philosophically too. 'I never allow myself in regard to my public life to dwell upon the fact that a thing is painful. Life has no time for such broodings. If it be true, as I fear, that we have been committing grave errors that . . . have cost thousands of lives and millions of money . . . the man capable of weighing his own fate and prospects . . . has need to take a lesson . . . from the soldier who gives his life at a shilling a day.'

Fortunately, Sebastopol fell in the September, as much through Russian inefficiency (of every three recruits sent to the Crimea two died on the way) as Allied skill. A young lieutenant of artillery named Leo

Tolstoy watched the emaciated skeletons struggling out; and in February 1856 peace was signed.

The sole comprehensible result of two years of labour, suffering, and mismanagement was that Russia undertook not to keep warships in the Black Sea; an undertaking she denounced fifteen years after.

XII

The peace found Gladstone still facing his great political problem; indeed, it had become harder. Nominally he was a Peelite, but the Peelites as a party were ceasing to exist. To rejoin the Tories meant to join Mr. Disraeli; to join the Liberals was to work with Lord Palmerston. Both prospects were distasteful. Lord Derby's orthodox Conservatives were making approaches; but his Peelite friends objected that the Conservatives could never trust him. 'If you were to join the Tory Party to-morrow,' said one, 'you would have neither their confidence nor their goodwill . . . they would break with you in less than a year.' 'Your opinions', another urged, 'are essentially progressive, while the Conservatives will always prefer a leader whose prejudices are with themselves.' He met Lord Derby, but for the moment nothing was arranged.

He joined with the Conservative opposition in their attacks on Lord Palmerston's Government. He even found it possible to work with Mr. Disraeli, and together they attacked the Budget of March 1857. Newspapers reported that Gladstone had gone back to his old allegiance. Lord Derby spoke warmly of him at a party meeting and advised his followers to think twice before declining a reinforcement that would make Conservative Government a possibility once again. Yet the Conservative leader spoke knowing the price he would have to pay for this striking personality. It was reckoned that eighty Members of Parliament might desert if Gladstone

came in. The Duke of Beaufort threatened to leave the party altogether.

But they would have been still more anxious if they had known what Gladstone himself was doing at that very moment; for he had established contact simultaneously with Lord Derby and with the Radical Pacifists led by Cobden and Bright, and they too were considering the possibility of him as an ally.

At this very moment it so happened that Lord Palmerston committed one of those high-handed acts in foreign affairs of which he was so fond. A native craft named the *Arrow*—a lorcha—plying in the China seas was taken up for piracy by the Chinese authorities. The *Arrow* was flying the British flag at the time, though it was doubtful with what validity. The local British resident demanded its release, and when this was refused he began to wage war on his own account by commanding the China Squadron to bombard Canton. Lord Palmerston immediately supported him to the fullest extent; and England found itself once again at war.

To this piece of theatrical arrogance Gladstone reacted at once, and the whole of the anti-Government forces massed behind him. Naturally, the Radical Pacifists were the spear-head of the attack, and Cobden moved a vote of censure. 'On the ground of natural justice which binds man to man . . . older than Christianity, broader than Christianity, which underlies Christianity', Gladstone indicted the Cabinet with burning indignation. Pacifists, Peelites, and Conservatives trooped into the lobby together and the Government was beaten by 16 votes. 'A division doing more honour to the House than any I ever remember', said Gladstone.

XIII

Palmerston went to the country. The country voted less on the China War than on the Crimean War, and

that in the full flush of victory. Gladstone was not opposed, but the Peelites and the Pacifists were destroyed. Cobden and Bright lost their seats and Palmerston returned stronger than ever.

Gladstone's path was now even more obscure. 'I shall see my duty,' he said, 'by absconding from general politics. I can neither follow the Liberal Party nor hope for Conservative reconstruction.'

But in July 1857 the House of Commons drew him back again over the question of the Government's Divorce Bill. As the law stood, divorce was only to be got through the expensive and cumbersome process of a Private Act of Parliament. Palmerston intended to set up a Divorce Court open to rich and poor alike. To Gladstone this appeared as a blow striking at the sacrament of marriage and the Church's independence of the law for which he had pleaded in his book on Church and State. As the principle of divorce had been conceded years ago and the only change proposed by the new Bill was to make it accessible to all classes instead of a luxury for the rich, Gladstone's course was highly illogical. None the less, in spite of the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury and nine Bishops supported the Bill, he hurried up to London in the dog-days to oppose it. After a disagreeable journey with an over-friendly fellow-passenger ('more genial than congenial') who wanted to drink brandy, smoke, and lend *The Times*, he found 'affairs very black, the poor Church deeper and deeper in the mire'. He spoke twenty-nine times in the House against the Bill, dwelling particularly on the unequal rights proposed to be conferred upon wives as being contrary to the Christian conception of the equality of the sexes. But Palmerston was determined to get the Bill through, and it became law after eighteen sittings.

And then, suddenly, a great political storm blew up. Italian refugees in London had plotted an abortive attempt on the life of Napoleon III. The French

Government complained to Lord Palmerston that bodies of assassins abused the British right of asylum, and hinted that in the interests of international understanding the law should be tightened up. Palmerston, in the somewhat inconsistent role of an internationalist, there-upon introduced a Conspiracy Bill; whereat the Nationalism he had so successfully exploited at the polls exactly a year before turned against him. He was hooted in Hyde Park. In the House Gladstone denounced the 'imputation upon us of favour for assassination lest national honour be henceforth a shadow and a name', and the Government fell.

Lord Derby was sent for and agreed to form a Conservative Government. Within an hour of kissing hands he got into touch with Gladstone. Mr. Disraeli, the party leader in the House of Commons, wrote personally to him. With his keen imagination which enabled him to see four-fifths of any problem in a flash, Benjamin Disraeli knew that his own leadership of the party was one of the obstacles to Gladstone's coming back. With the shallow cynicism that prevented him troubling to understand the remaining fifth he based that obstacle on entirely the wrong grounds. He could not realize exactly why Gladstone resented having to serve under him. Gladstone could not forgive the man who had wounded Robert Peel so mortally. Mr. Disraeli could not see that an incident to him so ancient and so trivial could stand in the way of Cabinet rank. Accordingly he ascribed Gladstone's attitude to a petty pique which made him unwilling for his own sake to take second place:

'I think it of such paramount importance to the public interests, that you should assume at this time a commanding position in the administration of affairs, that I feel it a solemn duty to lay before you some facts, that you may not decide under a misapprehension.

'Our mutual relations have formed the great

difficulty in accomplishing a result, which I have always anxiously desired. . . .

‘. . . for more than eight years, instead of thrusting myself into the foremost place, I have been, at all times, actively prepared to make every sacrifice of self for the public good, which I have ever thought identical with your accepting office in a Conservative Government.

‘Don’t you think the time has come when you might deign to be magnanimous? . . .

‘I may be removed from the scene, or I may wish to be removed from the scene.

‘Every man performs his office, and there is a Power, greater than ourselves, that disposes of all this.

‘The conjecture is very critical, and if prudently yet boldly managed may rally this country. To be inactive now is, on your part, a great responsibility. If you join Lord Derby’s Cabinet you will meet there some warm personal friends; all its members are your admirers. You may place me in neither category, but in that, I assure you, you have ever been sadly mistaken. The vacant post is, at this season, the most commanding in the Commonwealth; if it were not, whatever office you filled, your shining qualities would always render you supreme; and if party necessities retain me formally in the chief post, the sincere and delicate respect which I should always offer you, and the unbounded confidence which, on my part, if you choose you could command, would prevent your feeling my position as anything but a form.

‘Think of all this in a kindly spirit. These are hurried lines, but they are heartfelt. I was in the country yesterday, and must return there to-day for a county dinner. My direction is Langley Park, Slough. But on Wednesday evening I shall be in town.

‘B. DISRAELI

‘Grosvenor Gate, May 25th 1858’

On the other side Bright had already written:

‘If you remain on our side of the House you are with the majority and no Government can be formed without you. And I know nothing that can prevent your being Prime Minister before you approach the age of every other member of the House who has or can have any claim to that high office.’

Neither of them really understood him. The man who could resign office rather than support a grant to a remote Catholic college was not to be tempted by the prospects of easily becoming Prime Minister, nor to have past scars obliterated by a few polished phrases.

He told Bright, ‘My seeking on this occasion has not been very difficult. The opinions such as they are that I hold are strongly held, and although I set a value upon the power which office gives I earnestly hope never to be tempted by its exterior allurements. . . . Before I received your letter I had made my choice.’

To Mr. Disraeli he was courteous but noncommittal, but his objection still stood; besides, the Conservative Party undiluted with Peelites was not the reconstituted Conservatism that he was looking for.

‘Were I at this time’ (he wrote) ‘to join any Government, I could not do it in virtue of party connexions. . . . I must consider then what are the conditions which make harmonious and effective co-operation in Parliament possible, how largely old habits enter into them and what change would be requisite in the constitution of the present Government . . . to make any change worth a trial.’

So he preferred to stay where he was, uncommitted and free. In time things might shape themselves so that he could find a party of his choice. For the present he would wait.

Public opinion was not very sanguine about his prospects. People were saying that he was finished. The newspapers called him 'a man of speculation misplaced and lost in the labyrinth of practical politics'. They termed him 'the chief orator and the weakest man in the House of Commons' and announced 'men of mere intellect are quite unsuited for governing mankind'.

In October (1858) he accepted an offer from Bulwer-Lytton, then Secretary of the Colonies, to undertake a special mission to the Ionian Islands to report into the workings of the British Protectorate there. He found it hardly working at all. The Greek islanders seemed as anxious to be free from British rule as their Greek brothers on the mainland had been to be free from Turkish rule in the days when Gladstone had gone to the Eton Montem ceremony in Greek dress to show his sympathy for them.

XIV

He got back in March 1859, in time for the general election in the spring and was again returned unopposed for Oxford. Lord Derby's Conservative Government strengthened its position, but failed to secure an absolute majority and was beaten in the new House. In June 1859 Palmerston became Prime Minister. He invited Gladstone to be his Chancellor of the Exchequer. And this time the offer was accepted.

Gladstone had made up his mind. He had changed over from the Tory true blue to the yellow of the Liberal Party. The process had been gradual and almost unconscious. Indeed, it was only two years since he had refused Bright on the one hand and Mr. Disraeli on the other. But those two years had capped the experience of twenty. On the Ionian mission he had encountered the demand of a quarter of a million people to be badly governed by their fellow-countrymen rather than to be well administered by a foreign power. The same demand for

self-determination was sweeping Italy and all central and south-eastern Europe. He foresaw, and rightly, that the principle of Nationalism was to be the political main-spring of the coming years. To be a Nationalist in 1859 was to be a Liberal. Lord Derby and his supporters were always on the side of the established order. Lord Palmerston was as consistently for the peoples struggling to achieve their independence. As he wrote to Sir William Heathcote, his fellow-burgess for the University:

‘The two leading points which must determine immediate action are those of Reform and Foreign Policy. On the first I think that Lord Derby had by dissolution lost all chance of settling it, and it seems my duty to assist those who may perhaps settle it. Upon the second I am in real and close harmony of sentiment with the new Premier and the new Foreign Secretary. How could I say I will have nothing to do with you and be the one remaining Ishmael in the House of Commons?’

It was in fact, as he told Sir John Acton some time after, ‘the overwhelming interest and weight of the Italian question and of our foreign policy in connexion with it, joined to my entire mistrust of the former Government in relation to it led me to decide without one moment’s hesitation.’

PART II

I

THE year 1859 was the most important in English politics since the French Revolution had separated Fox from Burke. From the time when Louis XVI had died on the guillotine there had existed in England a strong, true

blue, conservative Tory Party. It was the Party of Church and King, it was the Party of Stability; albeit its basis had lately shifted from the enduring foundation of landed property to the less solid basis of manufacture and finance. Outside the Tory Party there had been all that time a shifting collection of politicians, often outnumbering it in the House, but united by very little except their opposition to the things it stood for. They ranged from Palmerston, who was the spiritual successor of Burke, to Bright, who was the spiritual successor of Fox. Because the interests that the Tory Party maintained were few, simple, and clearly defined, that party was compact and united. Because the interests of its opponents, all those who fell victim to its monopolies, were complex and conflicting, the anti-Tory Party was necessarily amorphous and divided.

The day that Gladstone took office under Palmerston he gave the anti-Tory Party a unity and direction equal to that of its opponents. Tories were united by a community of interests; Liberals were now to be united by a community of ideas. The Tories had Church, King, and Property. The Liberals were to have Liberty, Free Trade, and Peace. During the thirty years of his political life Gladstone had been slowly but definitely hammering out these principles. He had found his belief in Liberty among the stench and squalor of the Neapolitan dungeons. He had seen the glory of Free Trade in the piled abundance of the Great Exhibition. He had learned to cling to Peace through the wastage and incompetence of the Crimean War. In 1859 he brought these beliefs with him to the Government of Lord Palmerston, and it was about them that the Liberal Party crystallized out of the anti-Tory mass. The strength of these cardinal beliefs kept Liberalism on more than an equality with Conservatism until the outbreak of the European War in 1914.

II

On his return from the Ionian Islands in the spring of 1859 Gladstone had stopped at Turin to meet Cavour, whose great designs were moving to a crisis. The Prime Minister of Victor Emmanuel, King of Piedmont, was scheming to unite the several portions of Italy into one kingdom under his King, a kingdom from which all foreign influences were to be expelled and of which, incidentally, he should be Prime Minister. To win the Western Powers over to his scheme, Cavour had even sent an expedition as far as the Crimea, and Gladstone's presence in Turin was a marvellous opportunity to meet a key man in British politics.

Cavour presented his guest to his colleagues, and so played upon the Englishman's regard for the rights of nationalities that Gladstone came home an avowed partisan of Italian unity.

In the summer of 1859, when Gladstone entered the Palmerston Government, Cavour was reaping the first fruits of his Crimean venture, for Napoleon III was marching his troops through the white Lombard dust in the trail of a greater Bonaparte to assist King Victor Emmanuel to wrest Lombardy from the Austrians. At Magenta, and again at Solferino, Francis Joseph's white-coats broke as the cheering red-trousered battalions rolled into action; and in the heat of a scorching July the two Emperors signed Lombardy away to Victor Emmanuel. So Cavour advanced towards his goal, but that great prize—the Kingdom of Italy—still eluded him, so long as the Pope still ruled in Central Italy. And the Pope was Napoleon's friend. From France, then, there was nothing to expect beyond an Italian Federation with the Pope at its head. Cavour looked beyond France to England, and to England he looked through Gladstone.

Over the heads of Pope and Emperor he first appealed

to the unity of the Italian people. Secretly on a May night in 1860 he shipped the filibustering Garibaldi with a thousand red-shirt adventurers against the Neapolitan Kingdom. Landing in Sicily (apparently with no official backing), Garibaldi and his thousand raised the island in revolt against its Bourbon masters. From Sicily they passed triumphantly to the mainland, and, driving the Neapolitan Royalists before them, marched through their kingdom on the road to Rome.

Cavour's plan had worked. All Italy was in revolt and the game was his. Anticipating Garibaldi (who had now played his part), he launched the Piedmontese Regulars, without provocation or excuse, against the Papal territory.

Europe stood aghast at his conduct. The French withdrew their ambassador from Turin. Russia, Prussia, and Austria talked excitedly of intervention. Then it was that Cavour's diplomacy and Gladstone's convictions saved the cause of a United Italy. All through the previous year Gladstone had been working assiduously in the Cabinet to bring the English Government over to the Italian side. 'Naples has a Government as bad as anarchy. Rome unites the evils of the worst Government and the most entire anarchy. In those countries I can hardly imagine any change that would not be for the better', he wrote.

'Sat up 'til 2 a.m. with my letter to Lord John Russell about Italy', he noted in his diary.

' . . . two and a half hours with the Prince Consort *à deux reprises* about the Italian question . . . passed the evening with Lord John . . . much conversation on Italy.'

Now that the Piedmontese Army stood on Papal soil and Garibaldi's adventurers were actually in the Kingdom of Naples, these long efforts were rewarded. In face of a European concert marshalled against Cavour,

England spoke her mind unmistakably for Italian freedom:

'The Governments of the Pope and the Two Sicilies' (wrote Lord John Russell in a Foreign Office Dispatch that was to change the map of Europe) 'provide so ill for the welfare of their people that their subjects look upon their overthrow as a necessary preliminary to any improvement. Her Majesty's Government feel bound to admit that the Italians themselves are the best judges of their own interests. Her Majesty's Government do not feel justified in declaring that the people of Southern Italy have not good reasons for throwing off their allegiance to their former Governments . . . and could not pretend to blame the King of Piedmont for assisting them.'

The announcement was hailed by the Italians as worth more than a hundred thousand men. Within a few weeks the Piedmontese Army had routed the Papal volunteers assembled for the last crusade of Catholic Europe. King Victor Emmanuel entered Naples at Garibaldi's side, and in the New Year (February 1861) the first Parliament of a United Italy (temporarily shorn of Venice and the City of Rome) assembled at Turin.

Cavour was on his death-bed; but, thanks to Gladstone, his work was done.

III

That February (1861) which saw the first Parliament of a United Italy, saw also the first Parliament of a divided America. While the Italian Deputies were buzzing through the corridors of Turin, the Delegates of the Confederate States of North America were assembling in a bland colonial building at Montgomery, Alabama, to hear their President, Jefferson Davis,

proclaim their right to secede from the Union. The curtain which had just fallen on the last act of the drama of one people was going up on the opening scene in that of another.

That April American hands hauled down the Stars and Stripes on Fort Sumter.

The American Civil War divided the sympathies of Englishmen almost as bitterly as those of Americans. On the whole, Conservatives, from emotion, supported the South. To them the Southerners were planters and gentlemen united to England by the ties of commerce and upbringing. The Northerners were a pack of vulgar, counter-jumping Yankees. The Liberals, arguing from reason, were divided. It was true, of course, that the South was fighting to retain slavery; unfortunately, it was equally true that the South was also fighting for its liberty. Naturally the elements that had supported the anti-slavery agitation in England thirty years before were against the slave-owning States in America now. Dissenters, mechanics, artisans in the industrial North were for the Union, even when Lincoln's blockade of the Southern ports was not only starving the cotton-growers in the Carolinas but the cotton-spinners in Lancashire as well.

Lord John Russell said that the North fought for Empire and the South for independence.

Mr. Bright said he was on the side of the North.

And Mr. Disraeli was careful to say nothing at all.

But Gladstone would never consider expediency when his heart was moved by principle. He was never afraid of the logical conclusions of a clear-thinking mind. In the present instance, so it seemed to him, the people of the Southern States of America had as much right to stay out of a Union as the people of the Southern States of Italy had to come into one. Every other consideration he subordinated to this. Even slavery seemed to him to be of secondary importance to it.

'We may have our opinions about slavery,' he said in that great speech at Newcastle in the October of 1862, 'we may be for or against the South, but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation.'

Gladstone made his profession of faith with a full knowledge of his own responsibility. He was a Minister of the Crown. He was, for the first time, speaking as an acknowledged leader of the Liberal Party that was building itself about his philosophy. He had been received on the Tyne in almost regal state. At the head of a fleet of twenty-five steamers, amidst the roar of guns, he had sailed into the river. The bells had rung, the streets were crowded.

Honour give to sterling worth,
Genius better is than birth,
So here's success to Gladstone!

To that vast working-class audience he spoke words that were distinctly unpalatable. In the name of Liberalism he dared to proclaim to an audience distinctly on the side of the North his reasoned sympathies with the South.

His words were not lost on the rest of England. The American Ambassador (representing Lincoln's Government) seriously thought of asking for his passports. Even Lord John Russell wrote: 'I think you went beyond the latitude which all speakers must be allowed when you said that Jefferson Davis had made a nation.' In the logical pursuit of the principles in which he believed he had embarrassed his best friends and shocked his most devoted followers. But he had kept intact his reputation for consistency. And he had, by a deep instinct, sensed the trend of the future. Two years after his Newcastle speech the Southern Stars and Bars lay trampled on the

Field of Appomattox, Jefferson Davis was a fugitive, and his nation was a vanished dream.

Yet had England acted as Gladstone suggested that she should act, had she acknowledged the Southern Nation she could have created by that acknowledgment, the future might have been very different. There would have been two Unions instead of one. England would never have had to face the subsequent economic and financial rivalry of her most dangerous competitor. She would have maintained in the Confederate States of America a market for her goods and an outlet for her culture that might have undone the tragedy of the American War of Independence. And the United States might have been spared the nightmare of materialism, which gripped her for ninety years, and from that awakening from it which may be crueller still.

IV

Through the storms of the early sixties the world plunged on. The new United Italy and the new United States of America were joined by the new United Germany that Bismarck was consolidating piecemeal with military thoroughness and Prussian efficiency. 'The horizon enlarges, the sky shifts around me, it is an age of shocks', wrote Gladstone. And as the spiked helmets deployed across the Schleswig heather it was becoming plainer to an uneasy Europe that the young Siegfried was glorying in the new-found strength that had come to him as he drew out the sword. The Lord Chancellor told Gladstone how even the Prince Consort had boasted in an unguarded moment that 'we Germans have no boundaries'. Only in Poland was the new flame of Nationalism quenched, and there but for a time.

And as the world stage was being set for the new Act, Death was removing the old players whose parts had come to an end. One by one the Peelite leaders went.

Lord Aberdeen died in the winter of 1860. His was 'the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove', said Gladstone; 'a little child not from defective vision but from thorough nobleness of nature'. His chief lieutenants followed him before twelve months had passed. Graham, 'the most esteemed and valued of all his counsellors', and Sidney Herbert, the close friend of Gladstone as of Florence Nightingale. With them there passed all that was left of that farsighted and high-principled Peelite Party which without any popular roots had nevertheless changed the whole economic face of England.

In the December of 1861 the Prince Consort died too. 'He did not fascinate or command. There was a want of freedom, nature, and movement in his manner . . . which produced something . . . related to stillness and chilliness, but he was invariably modest, frank, and kind.' He was fundamentally a Liberal and had a liberalizing influence over the Queen, and how much his loss meant to Gladstone in the years that followed can only be guessed. John Morley wrote: 'It is impossible to doubt that if the Prince had survived at the Queen's right hand certain jars might have been avoided that made many difficulties for the Minister in later times.'

Gladstone found himself alone facing this changing world. He who had started as the truest of true blue Tories had become the most vivid of Liberal yellows, tinged with the red of Radical fire. But with it all it was not he but England that had changed. He had started his political life when England was the aristocracy. He had seen the middle class elevated to co-partnership with aristocracy in the control of the country. Now he perceived that the working class was about to claim its share. Yet all the time he had been consistent. In the thirties, when aristocracy meant stability and the working class revolution, he had defended the privileges and the positions of aristocracy

and been a Tory. In the forties and fifties, while the middle class was acquiring that stake in the country that bound it to her welfare, he had worked for that cause and been a Peelite. Now that the working class was also awake to its rights and responsibilities and had ceased to be revolutionary and destructive, he came forward as its champion and was a Liberal.

‘What are the qualities’, he asked, ‘that fit a man for the exercise of a privilege such as the franchise? Self-command, self-control, respect for order, patience under suffering, confidence in the Law. And when were these great qualities exhibited in a manner more signal, even more illustrious, than in the conduct of the operatives of Lancashire under the profound affliction of the winter of 1862? . . . To-day the fixed traditional sentiment of the working man has become one of confidence in the Law, in Parliament, even in the Executive Government.’

‘Since the abolition of the Corn Laws,’ a deputation from the newly formed Trades Union Congress told him, ‘we have given up political agitation. Instead we try to spend our evenings in the improvement of our minds.’

And one May afternoon in 1864 he had his chance to express his faith on the floor of the House of Commons. ‘Is not the state of the actual case . . . a scandal, with less than one-tenth of the constituencies composed of working men and less than one-fiftieth of the working men in possession of the franchise . . . and I venture to say that every man who is not presumably incapacitated . . . by personal fitness or political danger is morally entitled to come within the constitution.’ There was a storm in all the respectable newspapers, and Mr. Disraeli protested that he had revived the doctrine of Tom Paine. Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, was frightened. His tired Whig eyes could not clearly discern the Liberalism of to-morrow. ‘I must frankly say with much regret there is little in it that I can agree with. . . . The doctrine of Universal Suffrage I can

never accept. . . . I entirely deny that every sane and not disqualified man has the right to vote. What every man and woman has a right to is to be well governed and under just laws.' Charles I had voiced precisely the same sentiment on the morning of his execution.

Gladstone could not trouble himself with the old fellow; his course was clear. He was away in the North, face to face with the working class, addressing mass meetings, and talking with trade union leaders. Within a month of Palmerston's letter, the working men of York presented Gladstone with an address. They recalled his services to Free Trade when he stood by the side of Peel. 'We have marked', they said, 'your manifestations of sympathy with the downtrodden and oppressed of every clime. You have advanced the cause of freedom in foreign lands. To the provident operative you have by your Post Office Savings Bank Bill given security for his small savings. . . . These acts make up a life that commands our lasting gratitude.'

That autumn he went back to his native Lancashire. He opened parks; he spoke in the evenings; he toured the clubs; he attended high teas. Through Liverpool to Manchester he went inspiring his hearers, himself inspired. 'It is impossible that to a country like England the affairs of foreign nations can ever be indifferent. It is impossible that England ever should forswear the interest of Justice, of Order, and of good Government.' His audiences were flattered both by his presence among them and by the high compliment he paid them in talking to them as to his equals. In his diary he noted: 'So ended in peace an exhausting, flattering, and I hope not intoxicating circuit. . . . Somewhat haunted by dreams of halls and lines of people and great assemblies.' For the first time a politician of the first rank had appealed directly to the working man.

Next year Palmerston died. Gladstone was leader of the Liberal Party in truth if not in name.

GREEN

GREEN

I

LIKE a luscious autumn pear England lay ripening in the sunlight of mid-Victorian prosperity. Across St. George's Channel, in the selfsame sunshine, Ireland lay rotting. The passing of the Corn Laws in 1847 had been the passing of an epoch. England had been carried from a restricted agrarian economy and an imminent class struggle into an industrial and commercial order where all classes combined to share a richer and a fuller life. But to Ireland the selfsame measures brought disaster and ruin.

Behind the immemorial tariff walls that had enclosed the whole United Kingdom there had flourished upon Irish soil a teeming population of peasants and squireens. Before 1847 the Irishman enjoyed a boisterous happiness in a world of pigs and ponies, where whisky flowed freely and the jaunting-cars jogged from market to race-meeting. The Great Famine struck down that order with the chill hand of Want; but the consequent repeal of the Corn Laws at Westminster buried it as deep as the towers of lost Atlantis. Free Trade smashed Irish agriculture, and the blow fell with terrible effect on a countryside subdivided into a multiplicity of small holdings, many of them only one quarter of an acre in size. One Irish landlord in every three was ruined. Many a country gentleman who had subscribed to and administered relief funds when the Famine began was begging his dole of Indian corn after the Corn Laws were repealed. So desperate was the crisis that a special Act—the Encumbered Estates Act, 1849—was passed to enable the wreckage of their holdings to be sold without formality or delay to any one who would buy them. In 1841 there were 697,000 estates of less than fifteen acres;

by 1851 only 307,000 of them remained. One-sixth of the land in Ireland changed hands. The new owners were mostly speculators, joint stock companies, insurance concerns, Irish and English. Their first step was to clear the soil of its load of pauperized peasants. Eviction followed upon eviction: 306,000 people were driven out homeless to starve or to emigrate. Packed into the steerage of pitching paddle-steamers, tossed upon the North Atlantic, one-fifth of the emigrants died at sea.

Between 1840 and 1865 the population fell from eight and a quarter millions to five and a half millions.

And the light went out from the eyes of Ireland.

II

To the ordinary Englishman, even to the rank and file of English politicians in the sixties, the Irish tragedy and the consequences that were to flow from it was scarcely more real than the distress which follows a flood on the Yangtze Kiang. One man alone among the political leaders could clearly discern the little cloud which had already come up over the Western horizon, and that man was Gladstone.

'You cannot look to Ireland,' he told the Lancashire operatives on his great triumphal tour in the year before Palmerston's death, 'and say that the state of feeling there is for the honour and the advantage of the United Kingdom.' These were mild words. The state of feeling in Ireland whilst he spoke was as far from being to the honour and advantage of the United Kingdom as it could possibly be. Passionately, unreasonably, feverishly, it was anti-British. For the failure of the potato crop in 1847, for the evictions of 1849, for the state of the emigrant ships, for the depopulation of the soil, one cause was to blame—the tyrannical British. The British wanted to exterminate the Gael; they were vampires who sucked the life-blood of Erin. But for the British

Ireland would have twenty-five millions of people, tilling their own soil, leading happy and holy lives, far outstripping in the range of her commerce and the output of her industries the hated British themselves.

As soon as the emigrant ships dumped their pathetic cargoes upon the sidewalks of the New World, glib professional politicians fanned these flames into a burning zeal of hate. Secret societies, abiding outlets for the genius of the Irish, sprouted like toadstools from New Jersey to Illinois. Illiterate servant-girls and simple navvies were cozened out of their hard-won dimes for the 'Cause of Ireland'. And two years before Gladstone spoke (in 1863) the movement culminated in a great convention at Chicago. Those attending proclaimed themselves the champions of Irish freedom. They were the 'men of the great chief Fionn' who had died some thirteen hundred years ago—'the warrior caste—the Fenians'. Under the murky gas-jets, in the foetid Chicago air they raised their sweaty palms in the oath: 'In the presence of Almighty God I solemnly swear allegiance to the Irish Republic now virtually established and to take up arms when called on to defend its independence and integrity. . . .'

The American Civil War was playing to its close and a host of 'Generals, Colonels, Majors, Captains, and whatnots' were out of a job. Scores of them were enlisted by the Fenians and transported back to Ireland as gunmen of the coming revolution. Cargoes of arms ran into lonely coves and men drilled secretly in the moonlight. The times were tense.

Gladstone not only saw the trouble coming but he had his plans to forestall it. He would attack the grievances that were at the bottom of it all. 'The Irish Republic now virtually established' might sound very well in Chicago, but to Paddy who stayed in Connemara the Imperial connexion was not in those days a real affliction. What he did object to was having to pay

tithe in these bad times to an Established Church of which he was not a member. To Gladstone as a Churchman himself this was readily understandable. 'I would treat the Irish Church as a religious body with the same respect and consideration as the Church of England', he told Robert Phillimore. '. . . I am not loyal to it as an Establishment. . . . I will never be a party . . . to . . . frivolous acts of disturbance, nor . . . premature . . . schemes of change, but . . . I am not loyal to it as an Establishment. . . . I am bound to say I look upon its present existence as no more favourable to religion . . . than to civil justice and the contentment and loyalty of Ireland.' In that last year of Palmerston's life and leadership he persisted against Palmerston's advice and urgent request in saying as much on the floor of the House, although a member of the Government. For 'I could not, as Member for Oxford, allow the subject to be debated and remain silent'.

The effect both of his attitude and action was staggering. For Gladstone of all men to propose a frontal attack upon any part of the Establishment was a thing scarcely credible. That Church and King electorate at Oxford which had stood the strain of his advanced Peelism, which had even for the first (and last) time returned a Liberal burgess in his person, could not countenance such revolutionary doctrine as this. The country clergy voted heavily against him, and in July 1865 he was member for the University no longer. 'At night arrived the telegram announcing my defeat . . . a dear dream dispelled. God's Will be done.'

From the place of his education he turned to the place of his birth. Lancashire would have him if Oxford would not. Five thousand cheered him to the echo in his native Liverpool. 'My friends, I am come among you and I come among you unmuzzled. I find the growth of enterprise, I find the progress of social philanthropy here—I find the prevalence of toleration. I find

an ardent desire for freedom. If there be one duty more than another incumbent on the public men of England it is to establish and maintain harmony between the past of our glorious history and the future that is still in store.' Two days afterwards South Lancashire returned him as its member.

Gladstone had seen, and seen in time, the remedy to bridge the widening gulf between England and Ireland. The removal of the Irish Church Establishment in 1865 would have taken the sting out of Fenianism. But the fatal misfortune which has dogged Anglo-Irish relations postponed the remedy until it was just too late. Before Gladstone could win over his Liberal colleagues to see the urgency of the step that he proposed, the Liberal Government fell. Its Conservative successor, with Lord Derby as Prime Minister and Mr. Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was content to ignore Ireland for the purpose of dishing the Whigs with the Household Suffrage Reform Bill of 1867.

III

And all the time the Fenian fire ran on. A Kerry mob sacked coastguard stations, and armed men with blackened faces stormed a Martello-tower outside Queenstown. The good ship *Erin's Hope*, sailing from America, landed a cargo of officers, arms, and ammunition into the hands of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Plans were discovered to attack Chester Castle and 'if possible to commence a bloody affray between the people and the soldiery in Hyde Park'. The scheme was to skirt the crowd, at the Reform Demonstration, and as 'the British military bore down the Irish were to open fire all along the line'. The design was anticipated, seven hundred and fifty leaders were arrested, the Habeas Corpus Act suspended, and conspiracy forced underground.

Suddenly, the virus broke out on English soil. On 18th September 1867 two Irish-American gunmen, Colonel Kelly and Captain Deasy, taken up as vagrants, were on their way in a prison van from Manchester to Salford Jail. Their colleagues held up the van and shot dead the police sergeant in charge of them. Three of the assailants were arrested, tried, and hanged.

All Dublin turned out in their memory. There were long processions in which Moderates and Fenians walked side by side to honour the Manchester Martyrs. In a single night-time Fenianism passed from being the creed of a handful of visionaries and gunmen into the cause of the Irish people.

High upon the gallows tree,
Swung the noble-hearted three
By the vengeful Tyrants stricken in their bloom.
But they met him face to face
With the courage of their race,
And they went with souls undaunted
To their doom.

God save Ireland! said the heroes.
God save Ireland! say we all.
Whether on the scaffold high
Or the battlefield we die.
Oh! no matter when for Erin dear we fall.

If the Fenians had good cause to hate England, England soon had ample cause to hate the Fenians. Two months after the Manchester murder Clerkenwell was shaken by a terrific explosion. An infernal machine had been exploded under the prison walls by the Fenians, who hoped to release two of their number confined there. Six poor people living in the small houses in the neighbourhood were killed outright, six died from shock, and more than a hundred were injured, losing eyes, legs, or arms. Two women were driven mad. 'The country', said Gladstone, 'was shocked and horrified. . . . A sense of insecurity went abroad. Inhabitants

of the different towns were swearing themselves in as Special Constables. And the whole population embraced the vast importance of the Irish controversy.'

IV

Speaking for the Government, Lord Stanley lamented to Bristol Conservatives 'the painful, the dangerous, the discreditable state of things that continues to exist in Ireland. And yet,' he asked them, 'when we look for a remedy, who is there to give us an intelligible answer?'

Almost as he spoke Gladstone took up the challenge, and at Southport he put forward his proposals. The Irish Church must be disestablished, the tenantry must be secured, and a higher education must be set up that did not conflict with the Catholic convictions of the people.

At Christmas 1867 a vital change came over British politics. Lord John Russell retired from, and handed over, the Liberal Party leadership to Gladstone. Two months later Lord Derby resigned; and the Conservative leadership fell to Mr. Disraeli.

Next March, Gladstone brought forward a definite proposal to disestablish the Irish Church. As he had said two years before, so he now repeated: the time had come when the Church of Ireland as a Church in alliance with the State must cease.

'The Irish Establishment' (Cardinal Manning wrote to him) 'is a great wrong . . . the cause of division in Ireland, of alienation between Ireland and England. It embitters every other question, even the land question is exasperated by it. The fatal ascendancy of race over race is unspeakably aggravated by the ascendancy of religion over religion.'

The Church in Ireland as by law established was the undoubted successor to St. Patrick, St. Columba, and

those ancient Christian communities which first carried the light of the Gospel in the Dark Ages to the Continent of Europe. It covered the whole of the island. Its Bishops sat in the House of Lords and it had its own Ecclesiastical Courts. It boasted its clergy in every parish, its churches, lands, and properties, richly endowed and supported by a tithe rent charge of £400,000 a year. Alas! it was all a cardboard façade. The population of Ireland was five and a half millions; the membership of the Church of Ireland was six hundred and ninety thousand (about one in every eight souls). Outside Ulster and Dublin County it hardly had any members at all, and by the confession of some of its own ministers would cease to exist as soon as it ceased to be established.

All through the spring and summer of 1868 Gladstone fought the disestablishment battle in the House, and when the dissolution came in the autumn he made it his main challenge to Conservatism. 'In the removal of this Establishment I see the discharge of a debt of civil justice, the disappearance of a national, almost a world-wide, reproach, a condition indispensable to . . . the peace and contentment of that country.'

The struggle was bitter and it was fiercely contested. One Ulster parson announced that 'if they ever dare to lay unholy hands upon the Church, two hundred thousand Orangemen will tell them it shall never be'. 'If the Establishment be destroyed,' shrieked another, 'there must not be peace in Ireland. If they want us to die as martyrs we will die as soldiers.' The Archbishop of Dublin prophesied, 'If you overthrow the Irish Established Church you will put to the Irish Protestants the choice between apostasy and expatriation, and every man among them who has money or position, when he sees his Church go, will leave the country.' The laity emulated the wrath of their pastors. One fervid lawyer told Gladstone that 'if they could not valiantly succeed

they could nobly die'. And a Belfast paper said that if the Queen gave her assent to the Bill her Crown would be kicked into the Boyne.

Such an outburst of eloquence was enough to stir Lancashire and Gladstone was put out. But the voice of England was not the voice of Lancashire, and Greenwich sent him back. And an electorate heartily sick of the pretensions of the Irish Church returned a Liberal majority in the country of one hundred and twenty seats and nearly half a million votes in a total poll of two millions and a quarter.

On the afternoon of 1st December 1868 Gladstone was standing in his shirt-sleeves felling a tree in the garden at Hawarden when a telegraph-boy handed him a wire. 'Very significant,' he said to Mr. Evelyn Ashley who stood by holding his coat.

General Grey of the Royal Household was due to arrive from Windsor that evening. Such an errand could only have one object: the Queen was inviting him to form a Government. Quietly he went on with his tree-cutting. After a few moments he stopped and leaned on his axe. 'My mission is to pacify Ireland,' he said.

v

And so Gladstone became Prime Minister. 'You are at the end men live for' (wrote Manning); 'but not I believe the end for which you have lived. It is strange so to salute you, but very pleasant. There are many prayers put up among us for you, and mine are not wanting.'

'This birthday opens my sixtieth year. I descend the hill of life' (Gladstone wrote). 'It would be truer to say I ascend a steepening path with a burden ever gathering weight.'

On the 1st March 1869 he brought in his Bill for Disestablishment. Faithfully and steadfastly he had

kept to his programme. He had obtained a mandate to carry it into effect. But the sands were running down. Since he had first put forward his proposals the shadow of the Manchester martyrs and the Clerkenwell victims had fallen between England and Ireland. Every day and every hour the bitterness between the two peoples grew greater. The lives of future generations depended upon every moment; and the enemy, the Church of Ireland and the Church of England too, the House of Lords, the Orangemen, the Conservative Party with Mr. Disraeli at its head, strained every nerve to make that delay as long as possible.

In Diocesan Conferences Irish Churchmen were urged to 'trust in God and keep their powder dry'; and rather 'blow the cherished fabric of their churches to the winds of Heaven then yield them up to apostasy'. A great meeting in Exeter Hall stigmatized Gladstone as 'a traitor to his Queen, his country, and his God', and his Cabinet as 'a Cabinet of brigands'. Of the whole bench of Bishops one only supported the Bill in Second Reading.

In the House of Lords the opposition could delay the Bill, they could even rob it by their delay of its beneficial consequences, but stop it they dare not. On the 26th July 1869 the measure received the Royal Assent.

By the Irish Church Act the Church of Ireland was disestablished and partly disendowed as from the 1st of January 1871. It was provided that for the purpose of compensation no new interest was to be created between the passing of the Act and the day on which it came into force. But before the passing of the Act the Irish Churchmen had been swift to improve each shining hour. And while their friends in both Houses were moving amendments and debating clauses they were busy appointing scores of new curates and increasing the stipends of their incumbents; so that when the time for compensation came the Irish clergy by no means took their leave of the State without scrip or wallet. The

Church Courts were abolished and the Irish Bishops were deprived of their seats in the House of Lords. The fabrics of the churches and cathedrals together with all endowments since the Restoration were handed over to a new central body, and the clergy were given the choice of a lump sum in commutation of their salaries or of linking their fortunes with the new independent body.

VI

‘My mission is to pacify Ireland’, Gladstone had said. He had dealt with her first great grievance; he passed to the second—the Land.

Under the existing law of Ireland the soil was owned by a small group of landowners and farmed by a vast multitude of smallholder tenants. These tenants were simply tenants at will—their landlord’s will. They could be evicted whenever their landlord chose, and any improvements they had made passed to him without compensation. Since the Famine of 1849 and the Depression, which followed it, had driven so many of the old landlords out of the country these grievances had been accentuated a hundredfold. The new lords of the soil regarded it as a speculation; some of them were soulless profit-making companies; many were absentees. On the one hand were wholesale evictions, on the other secret societies of evicted tenants or ‘Ribbionmen’, who avenged the dispossessed by midnight shootings and furtive acts of arson. •

An intolerable state of affairs existed all over Leinster, Munster, and Connaught. ‘If the question is to go on without any real remedy the condition of Ireland will become worse. I am most anxious to meet the evil before it is too great for control’, said the new President of the Board of Trade, none other than John Bright.

Only in Ulster there was no land problem, and Ulster had its own ‘custom’ (dating at least from the time when

King James I had sought to safeguard the rights of the native Irish in his plantations), according to which a tenant enjoyed complete security of tenure so long as he observed the conditions of his tenancy, and a fair compensation for all improvements that he effected while it lasted. Gladstone decided to apply the Ulster custom to all Ireland.

His Irish Land Bill was introduced on 25th January 1870. He aimed, he said, at preventing 'the landlord from using the terrible weapon of undue and unjust eviction, by so framing the handle that it shall cut his hands with the sharp edge of pecuniary damages. The man evicted without any faults . . . will receive whatever the custom of the country gives. . . . Wanton eviction will, I hope, be extinguished. . . .'

The Bill was so obviously sound, so patently called for, that even the opposition did not venture seriously to oppose it; and by the spring of 1870 Gladstone's Landlord and Tenant Act was on the Statute Book.

The second objective had been carried. But the sands were running out faster than ever. 'We do not ask of Austria that she shall rule us well,' Mazzini had said, 'we ask that she should go.' And there were in Ireland men, very far from being Fenians, who were saying that England must go. In that same year an Irish Nationalist politician, a Protestant named Isaac Butt, founded his League for the attainment of Home Rule.

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VII

To Gladstone, a lasting settlement of the Irish problem was the key to British welfare in the years that lay ahead. Of the three immediate grievances he had already dealt with two—the Church and the Land. He was anxious to legislate for the third—Education—as soon as possible. No one realized more acutely than he that

it was a race between Ireland's growing passion over the past and Britain's policy of understanding for the future.

But the instrument which he had to use was the Liberal Party, and the Liberal Party had a host of interests nearer than Ireland. It was essentially the party of those who were excluded or hampered by Privilege and Tradition, and its policy of reform was directed to breaking down every barrier of class or creed which made for personal inequality. A host of abuses cried out for remedy, and Gladstone had to turn aside from Ireland to give them his attention.

So those early seventies which saw the French Empire encircled and broken among the low hills of Sedan, and the German Empire raised up among the mirrors of Versailles; the temporal power of the Pope trampled in the Roman dust beneath the feet of Victor Emmanuel's infantry, and the red flag of Communist world revolution hoisted over the smoking ruins of the Tuileries, witnessed also the slow march of British Democracy as one by one it scored its gains.

Mr. Forster, President of the Board of Education, through his new School Boards established a system of compulsory elementary education all over the country. Before 1870 nearly half the children in England went to no school at all. The new Boards were empowered to compel attendance from all children between five and twelve and to raise a special School Rate to supplement the Government Grant and the weekly payments by parents. In special cases the schools were to be entirely free.

Mr. Lowe, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, abolished nomination into the Civil Service and set up a system of open competitive examination instead, against which only the Foreign Office resolutely stood out.

Mr. Goschen, Member for the City of London, at last succeeded in carrying his Bill to admit Catholics,

Dissenters, Agnostics, and Jews to all the scholarships, exhibitions, and degrees at the Universities.

Mr. Cardwell, Secretary of State for War, embarked upon the Augean task of Army Reform. The old regimental numbers were abolished and new units created each with the name of a county, to consist of two battalions of regulars and one of militia. The old volunteer corps were attached to the new county regiments. The short-service system of seven years with the colours and five with the reserve was introduced. Promotion by the purchase of commissions was abolished under Royal Warrant after the House of Lords had repeatedly refused to sanction its destruction.

Mr. Gladstone himself sponsored a Bill to establish voting by secret ballot. The idea was as old as the Reform Bill of 1832 and had figured in one of the earlier drafts of it. Upon the old hustings (a wooden platform covered in with steps leading up to it) the rival candidates used to present themselves for nomination before a drunken and violent crowd of partisans which pelted them with rotten eggs and garbage. If a poll was demanded the poll books were opened on the hustings themselves, and for weeks on end the electors walked publicly through the crowd and up the steps to announce their choice aloud which the poll clerk duly recorded. On rival boards of blue and yellow the mounting totals were displayed to the crowd, which passed the time drinking, and breaking heads to show the violence of its party loyalty.

Open and above-board this system might be, but it was certainly crude in its workings. 'Experience', says Morley, 'showed that without secrecy in its exercise the suffrage was not free. The farmer was afraid of his landlord, and the labourer was afraid of the farmer; the employer could tighten the screw on the workman, the debtor quailed before his creditor, the priest wielded thunderbolts over the faithful.'

At the election before John Bright had declared, 'Whether I look to the excessive cost of elections, or to the tumult which so often attends them, or to the unjust and cruel pressure which is so frequently brought to bear upon the less independent class of voters, I am persuaded that the true interest of the public and of freedom will be served by the system of secret and free voting.'

In 1872 the Ballot Act was passed. Hustings, shouting mobs, bullying masters and trembling voters passed into the limbo of forgotten things. Yet the great change left the balance of parties unaffected. Only in one part of Great Britain did the Ballot Act make a vital difference—by dislodging the political power of the landlord it finally ended the Unionist ascendancy in the south of Ireland.

VIII

But the tide was turning against the Ministry. Its excess of reforming zeal was taking the energy out of its friends and the breath away from neutrals. A pack of indignant vested interests had been loosed in full cry. Public sentiment was offended at the first-fruits of Liberal policy. Under pressure from the temperance reformers the Ministry had reduced the opening hours of public-houses—which was enough to make every snuggery and saloon bar into a local branch of the Conservative Party. To crown everything, Gladstone, true to the resolution he had taken when confronted with the futile wastage of the Crimean War, had submitted a dispute with a foreign power to the arbitration of foreigners. During the American Civil War a 'screw and steam' wooden privateer built on the Mersey called the *Alabama* had wrought havoc among the shipping of the Northern States. Now that the war had ended with the victory of the North the Yankees had presented Great Britain with a bill for £9½ million damages. This dispute Gladstone agreed to refer to a neutral tribunal at

Geneva. In September 1872 the five arbitrators gave their award. They unanimously found Great Britain liable, and assessed the damages at the immense sum of £3½ million.

Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, keenest of opportunists, the swiftest to sense the slightest tremor of the public pulse, took good note of the subtle change in the feeling of the country that this succession of happenings was bringing about. Ever since he had bid for, and obtained, the plaudits of the electors by that savage attack which broke Sir Robert Peel he had made the study of popularity into a fine art. He could flatter the mob as he could flatter the monarch. And he was content to test any problem or any policy by the touchstone of its popularity alone.

Now he saw that the game was swinging his way and that the time had come to conjure up popular passion against the Liberal leader. So the fascinating, inscrutable actor betook himself to the meeting-halls. In the Crystal Palace, in the Free Trade Hall, at the Glasgow Conservative Club, and in the Pomona Gardens at Manchester he stoked the fires of his indignation and loosed his shafts one after the other at all the targets that his adversary had provided. His righteous wrath was positively like the Old Testament; his epigrams glinted; his eloquence carried his hearers to sublime planes; and the Conservative dowagers ecstatically clapped their hands over this wonderful leader about whom perhaps the most wonderful thing of all was that it was impossible to tell if he really meant a word he said.

He lashed the patriot fury of the Londoners at the Crystal Palace on a midsummer's night: 'The time is at hand when England must decide between national principles and cosmopolitan principles, and the issue is no mean one. Remember that in fighting Liberalism or the continental system . . . you have nothing to trust

to but your own energy and the sublime instinct of an ancient people.'

His climax he kept for the floor of the House of Commons. 'Extravagance is being substituted for energy by the Government. The unnatural stimulus is subsiding. Their eminent chief alternates between a menace and a sigh. As I sit opposite the Treasury Bench the Ministers remind me of one of those marine landscapes . . . on the coast of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes, not a flame flickers upon a single pallid crest. . . .'

Whatever its effect upon the multitude, Gladstone was not the man to be moved by a Crystal Palace firework display. He knew that he was becoming unpopular, but he knew also, what his rival did not, exactly how much unpopularity was worth. He had been unpopular before, and he was quite ready to be unpopular again. He passed on to the third head of his Irish policy.

IX

There was virtually no higher education for Roman Catholics in Ireland. Trinity College, Dublin, was an Elizabethan foundation, but no Catholic had ever been admitted until 1794 and none could hold a fellowship until 1869. The atmosphere of the University remained both Protestant and Unionist.

Sir Robert Peel had tried to remedy the deficiency in 1845 by founding three provincial colleges—the Queen's Colleges of Belfast, Cork, and Galway. But they had no facilities for religious teaching of any kind. The Pope condemned them as fatal to faith and morals. The Irish Catholic Synod of Thurles branded them as godless in an authoritative denunciation five years after and tried to found a Catholic University in Dublin. But this 'Catholic' University was a shabby affair. The British Government would not give it a charter, it had

no power to confer degrees, and hardly any students attended its lectures.

The Catholic majority of Ireland was crying out for a University of their own and one which would be on the same footing as that of the Protestant minority.

In the middle of January 1873 Gladstone made a gallant effort to meet the situation with his Irish University Bill. It was a generous offer in which Archbishop Manning heartily acquiesced. He proposed to set up a new University of Dublin, a body providing tuition and conferring degrees, governed by a Council, and endowed with £50,000 a year from various sources. To this University all the existing Irish foundations—Trinity, the three Queen's Colleges, and the Catholic University—were to be affiliated. There were to be no religious tests either for students or lecturers. Protestants and Catholics were to be taught side by side. A lecturer might be suspended or deprived who gave offence to the religious convictions of any member. And there was to be no instruction at all in contentious subjects like theology, modern history, and moral and mental philosophy.

Gladstone spoke for three hours in introducing the Bill; but it was heavy going. As he reported to the Queen: 'The general impression last night appeared to be that the friends of Trinity College were relieved; that the Liberal Party and the Nonconformists were well satisfied with the conformity between the proposed measure and the accepted principles of University organization in England; but that the Roman Catholics would think themselves hardly or at least not generously used.'

Cardinal Cullen, leader of the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland, was not satisfied. He strongly objected to a mixed system of education; he complained that the proposed Council might appoint geologists and zoologists objectionable in Catholic eyes. Manning wrote 'strongly

urging them to accept it'; but Irish Catholicism was obdurate and the House of Commons was 'fitful and fluctuating' on Third Reading.

Had Gladstone been willing to court popularity he might have compromised either by amending his Bill or by making the Irish Catholics a grant for their own University—which was what they really wanted. But the Bill had been brought in after careful consideration and he was never the man to bow either to political pressure or to popular clamour. As he told the Queen: 'It is not in the power or the will of your Majesty's advisers to purchase Irish support by subserviency to the Roman Bishops.' Had he clung to office he could have faced defeat on the Bill and then appealed to the Liberal Party for that vote of confidence which they were so anxious to give him, for he still had a majority of eighty-five in the House. But he had no use for such 'verbal promise of support just when its substance had been denied'. He preferred, without any manœuvring, to stake his Ministry's existence upon the measure.

On the 9th March Cardinal Cullen issued a flaming pastoral letter to be read in all the churches inveighing against the proposed rich endowment of non-Catholic and godless Colleges while not a farthing was given to Catholics.

On the night of 11th March 1873 the House of Commons reached the critical point in the debate. Swift to seize his opportunity, Mr. Disraeli rose at half-past ten and 'spoke amidst rapt attention till midnight'. Gladstone had mistaken 'the clamour of the Non-conformist for the voice of the Nation,' he said. 'You have now had four years of it. You have despoiled churches, you have threatened every corporation and every endowment in the country. You have criticized every profession and vexed every trade. No one is certain of his property and nobody knows what duties he may have to perform to-morrow. I believe the people

of this country have had enough of the policy of confiscation.'

At two in the morning the division was called. There was a majority of 3 against the Government and 68 Irish Catholic members were numbered in it.

Gladstone was the first English Prime Minister to sacrifice office and popularity to serve the cause of Ireland; yet it was the votes of Irishmen that brought him down.

He resigned at once, but Mr. Disraeli wanted the full measure of his victory. He was not ready yet. So for ten months more the doomed Liberal Government were forced to struggle on until the dissolution came in the January of 1874. Although Gladstone's care and skill enabled him now to promise the final repeal of the income tax the country was in no mood to listen to him. Even at Greenwich he barely scraped home. Mr. Disraeli had a majority of 50 in the new House.

x

Gladstone was now sixty-five years old. He had served his country for more than forty years. He was older than Peel had been when he retired. He had had a far longer active life than the run of great statesmen in the past. 'I deeply desired an interval between Parliament and the grave', he said. He felt himself too old to tussle in the interminable squabbles of cantankerous Liberals; and his mission to pacify Ireland had been thwarted in sight of success.

So he decided that the time had come to hand on the Party leadership and retire to the quiet of Hawarden. The Liberal leaders met at Lord Granville's house, and when they dispersed he could write 'my colleagues all submit and I am free'. The furniture at Carlton House Terrace was got ready for a sale; the house itself was put in the market. He disposed all his various affairs

so as to break finally and irrevocably with life in London. The Queen was 'not entirely unprepared'. The Duke of Argyll wrote 'sincerely to congratulate you upon your withdrawal' and the big-whigs talked eagerly of recovering the old Liberal position, demolished for a time by Mill and Gladstone and Cobden. But the people reacted otherwise. Men went about saying that all sunshine was gone out of politics; and one paper talked of Gelon's message to the Greeks that the spring was taken out of the year. 'We do not know', wrote a widely read Nonconformist journal, 'what the English people have done for Mr. Gladstone that can be compared for a moment with what he has done for them.'

He took his farewell of a people that was loath to let him go and went his way fully believing that the curtain had fallen for the last time on his public life.

XI

To Ireland the Gladstone Government had brought at least a passing measure of peace. The economists noted how prosperity seemed to be creeping back. Wages were increasing. *The Times* newspaper declared that at no period of her history did Ireland appear more tranquil, more free from serious crime, more prosperous, and more contented. The Home Rule Movement was beginning to canalize the various streams of political activity into a single constitutional and moderate course. Its leaders were not immigrant East-siders or Kentucky colonels. They were the Anglo-Irish gentry who were now offered a great opportunity to take the lead in this new-found expression of Irish Nationalism. Of the fifty-nine Home Rulers returned to the new Parliament at Westminster half came from the landowning class. Isaac Butt, secretary of the Movement, was himself an English barrister, a former

Professor of Political Economy at Trinity College, and the son of a Protestant clergyman.

If only these moderate men whom Ireland had produced in response to Gladstone's measures of reconciliation had found a Liberal Government to meet them in London the age-long warfare between England and Ireland might have been settled then and there. The tragedy was that they found Mr. Disraeli backed by an ununderstanding Conservative majority.

The new Parliament was scarcely a year old when a by-election took place at Meath in April 1875. The successful candidate was a young man of twenty-nine, a squire in County Wicklow. He had been to Cambridge. His ancestors had been part of Cromwell's garrison, and he had not a drop of Irish blood in his veins. He was slight, sallow, handsome, shy, austere, very reserved. His name was Charles Stewart Parnell.

Parnell brought to the Home Rulers in 1875 precisely that energy and power of crystallization which Gladstone had brought to the Liberals in 1859. He was an inspired guerrilla leader—working in the House of Commons. The Conservative House was not interested in Ireland; Parnell saw to it that it should be interested. No one was more expert in the rules of the House than he; but he used them simply for obstruction. Isaac Butt might complain that these methods were 'lowering the dignity of the Irish Nation and the Irish Cause', but Parnell was a stronger man than Butt and bit by bit the tactics of Parnell became the tactics of the Home Rulers. Inevitably Butt yielded the leadership to Parnell, and from that moment the Irish Nationalists became a running sore in the body politic. Mr. Disraeli would preach Imperialism in lofty periods; Parnell would bob up with a constant reminder that in one near-by part of the Empire Imperialism had a distinctly seamy side. On one memorable occasion the members were kept out of their beds all night (for the first time

in history) to hear the woes of Ireland from the lips of Parnell and four of his friends. 'We will never gain anything from England,' he cried out in that melodious and moving Cambridge accent, 'unless we tread upon her toes. We will never gain a single sixpennyworth from her by conciliation.'

XII

The bells of St. Paul's joyously rang in the New Year—1876—to the cheers of a crowd that stretched away to Temple Bar. In all the gin-shops in the Strand merry toppers were drinking Dizzy's health.

Yet the bells might better have tolled the knell of Christian men and women slaughtered by Dizzy's Turkish friends. The Crimean War had given the Sublime Porte a breathing space. She used it so to oppress her Christian subjects that the oppression became at last intolerable. Scarcely had the spring snows melted on the slopes of the Rhodope mountains when her distracted subjects rose in desperate revolt. The Bosnians, the Hertzo-Govinians and the Bulgarians turned upon their Turkish oppressors. Swift and terrible was the answer of their tyrant. Hordes of Bashi Bazouks swept down upon the luckless provinces to exterminate the population village by village. Twelve thousand were butchered in the district of Philippopolis alone. The British Consul saw piles of women's and children's bodies heaped by the wayside. Twisted, mangled, eyes gouged out, hands chopped off, with tongues slit, the wretched survivors crawled over the smouldering ruins of their peasant homes. Slowly the news filtered through to England.

Questions were put in Parliament, and Dizzy answered them. He was in a good temper; he was about to become an aristocrat at last and, as Lord Beaconsfield, to take his place among his peers. He was positively

jocular. 'It is all coffee-house babble', he said. 'Oriental races do not generally have resource to torture; they terminate their connexion with culprits in a more expeditious manner.' The Bashi Bazouks, he said, were altogether delightful people and the rightful owners of the soil and (possibly with some hazy recollection of Voltaire's *Candide*) the Bulgarians were their cruel oppressors.

In time, the news reached a certain retired, humorous, but still eagle-eyed old gentleman as he sat among his trees and lawns in Flintshire. He read the story of the massacres; he read also the statements of the British consuls and correspondents. And he read the clever little witticisms of Lord Beaconsfield. He read; and he could not keep silent. Working through the August heat, he composed a pamphlet that should wake the conscience of a Christian country to the intolerable sufferings of a Christian people. He wrote of these happenings as 'the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the present century, if not within the memory of man'. 'I entreat my countrymen . . . to insist that our Government, which has been working in one direction, shall work in the other . . . in obtaining the extinction of the Turkish executive power in Bulgaria. Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely, by carrying off themselves. Their *zaptiehs*, and their *mudirs*, their *bimbashis* and their *yuzbashis*, their *kaimakans* and their *pashas*, one and all, bag and baggage, shall I hope clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned.'

Never did a pamphlet sell like that one. Forty thousand copies went within three days of its first appearance. (Lord Beaconsfield was extremely annoyed. He read the pamphlet. He thought it passionate, vindictive, badly written of course, and 'the worst of all the Bulgarian atrocities'.) But when the old man showed himself once again to his constituents at Blackheath a

vast concourse, the first of many, welcomed him back to public life. He spoke to them for an hour; none who heard him ever forgot that experience, as the handsome face lifted itself in generous indignation, and the magnificent voice thundered out its indictment.

In the autumn of 1876 Holy Russia came forward to champion the oppressed Christians of the East. Lord Beaconsfield threatened her, after turtle soup at the Mansion House, with 'a righteous war' if she persisted. Such words alarmed thinking men of all parties and of no party. Ruskin, Froude, Carlyle, and Burne Jones called to pledge their loyalty to Gladstone. A great assembly of writers, thinkers, and divines gathered in the St. James's Hall determined that 'no matter how the Prime Minister may finger the hilt of the sword the nation will take care that it never leaves the scabbard'.

Lord Beaconsfield also had his friends. London was with him. Smart society was with him. The metropolitan Press was blatantly on the side of the Turk. The West End clubs and the East End public-houses were his strongholds. The music-halls never ceased to flaunt the Union Jack and revile Gladstone.

We don't want to fight,
But by jingo! if we do,
We've got the ships,
We've got the men,
We've got the money too.

'It was the most solemn Christmas (1876) that I have ever known', wrote Gladstone. 'I see that Eastward sky of storm and of trouble.'

In April of the New Year (1877) Russia could march to set the Christians free, sweeping the Turks from her path like leaves blown by the springtime gales. And all the lands of the ancient Christian Empire of Byzantium resounded with the songs of her rightful successors.

In May Gladstone appeared in the House again. He spoke to a group of resolutions which condemned the

conduct of Turkey and called for British interference. For two and a half hours he spoke 'like an inspired man', and the House thrilled to that ancient magic touch. After five days' debate the division was in favour of the Government, but the Conservatives had been shaken.

In the same month he visited Birmingham, dined with the Chamberlains, and spoke for over an hour to twenty-five thousand people.

In October he crossed over to Ireland and received the Freedom of Dublin. And by Christmas Russia had beaten Turkey to her knees.

In the summer of 1878 Bismarck welcomed the delegates of the European Powers to the Congress of Berlin. Russia had the ball at her feet, and Lord Beaconsfield found it necessary to bluff her out of her gains. With superb address he moved his pieces. The Fleet was sent to the Dardanelles; the reserves were called up; Indian troops were ordered to Malta; a vote of credit for £6 million passed the House. Russia paused, Russia gave way. But not before she had set the Christians free. Out of the unhappy Turkish provinces arose the Balkan States. Constantinople, the ancient capital of Christendom, did not after all come back to Christian hands. Britain got Cyprus. Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield, came home boasting that he had brought peace with honour; albeit his policy brought a war stirred up by Russia in Afghanistan before the year was out.

XIII^c

But to the struggling people of Ireland Lord Beaconsfield had brought neither honour nor peace. The harvest of 1879 was the worst since the Great Famine. Once more the tenants great and small were hard put to it to keep alive. The burden of rent suddenly became acute again. Michael Davitt, the son of a Mayo farmer, declared that rent for land under any circumstances, in

prosperous or bad times, 'is nothing more than an unjust and immoral tax upon the industry of the people'. Davitt went to Parnell; upon him he urged the formation of a Land League whose members should bind themselves to pay no more rent. Parnell fell in with the idea, and in October 1879 the League was formed. All over southern Ireland rents were withheld. The landlords replied by obtaining eviction orders.

'What are you to do,' Parnell asked, 'to a tenant who bids for a farm from which his neighbour has been evicted?'

'Kill him! Shoot him!' shouted the audience.

'When a man takes a farm,' replied Parnell slowly and deliberately, 'you must show him in the streets of the town, you must show him in the fair and in the market-place, aye, even in the house of worship, by leaving him severely alone, by isolating him from his kind as if he were a leper of old; you must show him your detestation of the crime he has committed. And you may depend upon it that there will be no man so full of avarice, so lost to shame, as to dare the public opinion of all right-thinking men, and to transgress your unwritten code of laws.'

The boycott spread like a canker over the countryside, and it did not spare its victims even in death. When Lord Mountmorris (he had evicted no one) was shot dead from behind a hedge, the owner of the first house refused to take his body, and no undertaker would send a hearse for it.

The Land League flourished. Parnell and his secretary, Timothy Healy, journeyed with Davitt to the United States, addressed monster meetings and lectured Congress on the Irish question. Funds poured in. At a meeting at Troy a man gave Parnell twenty-five dollars. 'I give five dollars for bread and twenty for lead', he said.

Back in Ireland, the Land League had grown so

powerful that it could set up its own courts where its justice was administered in defiance of the Queen's Writ; £600 was subscribed to the defence of a man who had murdered a land-agent in County Wexford. 'If the tenant-farmers of Ireland shoot down landlords as partridges are shot in the month of September I will never say one word against them', declared one Matthew Harris, a prospective Member of Parliament. Ireland was no longer ruled by Lord Beaconsfield's Government; the Land League was its master.

XIV

Gladstone felt he must come back. The land was sick. The fanciful romances of Lord Beaconsfield were costing England dear. His sabre-rattlings in the Dardanelles had led to the loss of brave lives in the cold Afghan mountains. His *Arabian Nights* fantasy about Turkey had blinded him to the clear duty he owed to the Christians of Eastern Europe. His wilful indifference to the rising temper of the Irish people had exasperated twenty counties into anarchy.

And Gladstone's moment came. In January 1879 he was asked to contest the key Scottish seat, the County Division of Midlothian, at the forthcoming general election. In the autumn, the old veteran set off for Edinburgh to open his great campaign. There was no doubt that the country wanted him. As the express thundered its way from Liverpool knots of north-country folk assembled along the line to wave him God-speed. Every station platform held its cheering crowd. On through the Lowlands the train plunged. Down from the crofts and hill-sides and out of the little textile towns beside the Tweed the people flocked to see it go by.

At Edinburgh night had already fallen, but the whole of Princes Street was one great Liberal demonstration. All that week his meetings were packed out. Fifty

thousand people sought to cram a hall which would only hold six thousand. It was a harsh winter and snow lay on the hills, yet men journeyed even from the Hebrides to hear the grand old man. 'For five years,' he told them, 'you have been told of nothing but the interests of the British Empire, of scientific frontiers, and new Gibraltars, and what is the result of it all? A greater Russia has been made our enemy. Europe is troubled. India at war. In Africa a great bloodstain. Why? Because there are other things in this world besides political necessities. There are moral necessities. Remember that the sanctity of life in the villages of Afghanistan, amid the winter snows, is every bit as inviolable in the eyes of the Almighty as it is in your cities.'

There was not a collier or a cottager too poor to decorate his house the day 'Mister Gledstane' went by. They spoke of him for years after—to their children and their grandchildren. 'An auld man, Geordie Paul, lived all alone in a wee cot up there', a Haddingtonshire housekeeper told Sir Henry Lucy. 'He used to sit at his door reading the paper spread on his knee and mony's the time when he thocht naebody was looking I've seen . . . the tears drap down on the paper and he often muttered to himself, "To think they'd use Gladstone sae ill and he sic' a man".'

Out of the heart of Midlothian the clear call to a crusade rang through town and village. It was more than a demand to turn out a Government; it was an appeal to all for whom spiritual values still counted; and above all it was a call made by one who had never infringed them or departed in forty years of public life by one hair's-breadth from the straight way of high principle. The Puritan heart of Great Britain stirred at the voice of the prophet of Midlothian.

But Lord Beaconsfield? How should he know of such things? To him the voice of the people was to be heard

in the laughter of the West End of London. When the cabmen, dropping him at his door, said, 'I have read all your books, my lord'; when the little prostitutes smiled to him in Piccadilly; when the Gaiety Chorus decided that they would all rather marry Lord Beaconsfield than Mr. Gladstone (save one who wanted to marry Gladstone so that Lord Beaconsfield could run away with her); when a member of the House of Lords told him, 'I was with the Queen yesterday, and she thinks you are the greatest man in her kingdom'; he thought all England was saying 'Well done'. He was swiftly undeceived.

In March 1880 the general election came. It was no ordinary party fight. It was a conflict between two worlds. Sallow, shrivelled, sphinx-like, the slight exotic Disraeli, in his floating cape with the collar of astrakhan, moved around rallying to his side the drawing-rooms, the clubs, society, the polite world, cultured and cynical, the world that whoever it might deceive never deceived itself. He rallied also a larger public: all that was left of the old deep-drinking, hard-swearing, rough, boisterous, generous, ignorant, complacent merry England. But round the rugged figure of Gladstone gathered the writers, the thinkers, the students, all that section of the upper classes that believed in its duty to reform the world; the merchants, the shopkeepers, the solid business mass of the community that led regular, well-ordered lives; the artisans, the fishermen, the yeoman farmers, upright, narrow, God-fearing, righteous men; the thousands who understood Gladstone as Lord Beaconsfield never understood him. For whatever Dizzy could do, he could not understand his opponent nor yet estimate him aright.

'Posterity will do justice to that unprincipled maniac', he screamed. 'Extraordinary mixture of envy, vindictiveness, hypocrisy, and superstition. . . . Whether Prime Minister or leader of the Opposition, preaching or praying, speechifying or scribbling, never a gentleman.'

The struggle was terrific. Fervour and enthusiasm matched skill and organization—and overthrew them.

In the new House there were:

347 Liberals;
240 Conservatives; and
65 Irish Nationalists.

The Government had no choice but to resign. The Queen did her very best not to send for Gladstone. She tried to persuade Lord Hartington to form a Government, but he explained to her that it was Gladstone she must have. 'On May 20th, 1880, after eight-and-forty years of strenuous public life, Mr. Gladstone met his twelfth Parliament, and the second in which he had been chief Minister of the Crown.'

The Queen tenderly took leave of Lord Beaconsfield. She made him promise to write often and to come and see her, and she gave him her bust in bronze and a plaster cast of her pony.

Lord Beaconsfield did not, after all, write very often. His blue brougham was seen more and more rarely at Hyde Park Corner, and the familiar figure 'with the lustreless eyes and face like some seamed Hebraic parchment . . . whispering behind his hand to the faithful Corrie' was seldom to be met in the Broad Walk at Kensington Gardens. On the 19th April 1881 he died at his house in Curzon Street, Mayfair.

RED

RED

I

ALL through the nineteenth century the world had been growing smaller. Sped upon the wings of modern invention prospectors and pioneers had pushed their way up crocodile-infested rivers and over arid stretches of scrub and sand to return with fortunes or fevers, with gold or diamonds, or ivory or leopard skins, but always with schemes to entice the Home Government to back their exploitation with gunboats and Maxim guns.

So some of us chivvy the slaver,
And some of us cherish the black,
And some of us hunt on the Oil Coast,
And some on the Wallaby track:
And some of us drift to Sarawak,
And some of us drift up The Fly,
And some share our tucker with tigers,
And some with the gentle Masai
(dear Boys!),
Take tea with the giddy Masai.

There was a scramble to hoist national flags in outlandish places, and the white spaces on the maps of the world grew smaller and smaller. But the red spaces of the British Empire grew larger and larger; until young Victorian misses in the schoolroom could view their globes with wonder to see how much of the habitable world owed allegiance to the widow of Windsor.

Arch-apostle of this new Imperialism which enabled a nation of shopkeepers to sell its goods with the help of its Lee-Enfields and Martinis, was the Conservative Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield. He asked nothing better for his Administration than that it should for ever be associated with the successful exploitation of Empire, for British business and party propaganda.

He began well enough. In 1875 his sensational purchase of Suez Canal shares from the Khedive of Egypt ensured Britain's sea-communication with India, and proved a very profitable investment.

Two years later he proclaimed the dumpy little Queen with the poke bonnet and the parasol Empress of India amid the trumpeting of elephants and the glitter of gems beyond the imaginings of a Marlowe.

Next year he struck yet another attitude. Hunched and bent at the Congress of Berlin the inscrutable Jew gave orders in Britain's name to the Metternichs and Colonnas, to His Apostolic Majesty and the Tsar of All the Russias. He came back to a frenzied London talking of Peace with Honour and everywhere the sun was shining.

Next year the clouds came, the Honour was problematical and Peace was gone. Russia struck back by making trouble between Britain and Afghanistan. There was a frontier incident, and Lord Beaconsfield launched an army to occupy the country. Amid the mountains and the nullahs north-west of the Khyber the second Afghan war spluttered on, costly and inglorious. A British resident was massacred with all his staff at Kabul, a British brigade was cut to pieces at Maiwand.

In 1877 Lord Beaconsfield cast his appraising eye on Africa. The surly Boers trekking before the advance of the British Empire in South Africa had set up a squatter republic in the Zulu hunting-grounds beyond the Vaal. Endangered by Zulu risings, hopelessly entangled in its own financial incompetence, the Transvaal Republic floundered like a whale stranded in the shallows. One of the many factions in the quarrelsome community invited the British Empire to throw its protection over it. An address, chiefly from immigrant gold-prospectors in the 'diggings' (the National Assembly repudiated it), asked for Home Rule within the Empire. Lord Beaconsfield's lieutenants, ignoring alike the National Assembly

and the conception of Home Rule, made that address a pretext for downright annexation. So they hoisted the Union Jack over Pretoria on 12th April 1877.

Before two years this adventure involved Britain in a Zulu war. A British force was massacred with a shower of assegais at Isandhlwana, and the British people began to learn that

after the game you must pay for the same.

In the end, the Zulus were crushed, but, with the removal of the danger they presented, the Boers saw the last excuse for a British occupation of the Transvaal removed.

Seven thousand out of the eight thousand electors petitioned the Conservative Government for an independent Transvaal, while from the diggings pathetic addresses of loyalty dribbled in with a few dozen signatures. Two Boer delegates waited on Lord Beaconsfield's Colonial Secretary in London. And in the Transvaal there were keen mass meetings for independence and the Government was petitioned in memorial after memorial. In the autumn of 1879 Sir Garnet Wolseley was sent out as High Commissioner. Instead of giving the Boers the Home Rule Constitution for which they had hoped, he set up a nominated Legislative Council at Pretoria and packed it with British officers. To the Boers he was lyrical. He assured them that 'the sun would forget to shine and the Vaal River flow backwards sooner than the British flag cease to fly over the Transvaal'. In a private dispatch to the Government he was crudely practical. 'The Transvaal,' he told the Colonial Secretary, 'is rich in minerals; gold has already been found in quantities, and there can be little doubt that larger and still more valuable gold-fields will sooner or later be discovered.' The Boers went growling off to take out their Mausers and to form their commandos, and as the ox-teams drew their departing wagons homewards there came the first faint rumble of war.

And so in May 1880, when the British people grew sick of Lord Beaconsfield's expensive Imperialism and returned Gladstone once more, there was still a whirlwind to reap.

II

A war raging in Afghanistan, and a war pending in the Transvaal, was the sinister legacy that Lord Beaconsfield had bequeathed to his successor. It was Gladstone's first aim to end the former as quickly as possible and to avert the latter at any reasonable cost. None knew better than he how a war lightly undertaken could drag on indefinitely until the fibre of the whole nation was demoralized. He had learnt that from the Crimean adventure. Nobody was more fully alive to the fact that a people forcibly held down against its will was an abiding source of weakness to an Empire. He had seen that in the Ionian Islands, he was seeing it in Ireland every day.

In the Afghan question Gladstone acted decisively. To hold Kandahar (Roberts had just taken it) would be strategically difficult and expensive in men and money. To continue to hold it would create permanent ill-feeling among the Afghans and present Russia with a ready-made ally at the gateway to India. If, on the other hand, Kandahar was to be evacuated then the sooner the better. Gladstone determined to withdraw the British Army immediately.

His proposal was violently attacked by all those who were unwilling to suffer a surrender of British prestige.

The Queen was thoroughly upset, and for a time she refused to embody any reference to the forthcoming evacuation in her Speech from the Throne.

On the 5th January (1881) she wired from Osborne:

' . . . I think a positive declaration of not retaining Kandahar most dangerous. Anything short of a positive declaration I would consent to.'

The same day she declared in another wire:

‘I strongly object to stipulation about Kandahar, as I was assured nothing should be yet declared as to the abandonment. Cannot this be omitted from the Speech?’

Gladstone’s answer was unequivocal:

‘Kandahar. Cabinet advised and deemed urgent. Sixth September now four months ago. Viceroy afterwards informed. Dispatch unusually delayed in deference to Your Majesty’s wishes, but went on 11th November. We deem it impossible to withhold from Parliament basis of policy, and terms of announcement are studiously guarded as to time.’

‘The Queen in approving the Speech *generally*’ (wired Victoria, still obstinately fighting a rearguard action) ‘commands the Ministers in Attendance to convey to the Cabinet her disapproval of *that part* of the Speech *referring to Kandahar*; and the Queen *only* gives her assent to the Speech under the *express understanding* that the *Cabinet will give her an assurance* that, should *circumstances arise rendering the retention of Kandahar desirable*, the *Government will not hesitate to continue to hold that position*.’

Gladstone assured her that the Government would not. The Queen gave way; the Army came home; and one at least of Lord Beaconsfield’s adventures had been cleared up.

III

Gladstone had never approved the annexation of the Transvaal. In his Midlothian speeches he called it a country ‘where we have chosen most unwisely, I am tempted to say insanely, to place ourselves in the strange predicament of the free subjects of a monarchy going to coerce the free subjects of a republic, and to compel

them to accept a citizenship which they decline and refuse'. 'If', he said, 'the Transvaal was as valuable as it is valueless I would repudiate it because it is obtained by means dishonourable to the character of this country.'

In the May of 1880, when the new Liberal Cabinet met, Gladstone had the opportunity to make his Midlothian sentiments good. Unfortunately, he blundered. He made the mistake of being guided by the advice of the 'men on the spot'. They told him that in the three years since the British had first gone in to their country the Transvaal Boers had become as thoroughly reconciled to Britain as their compatriots at the Cape. They said that to abrogate the annexation would plunge the country into civil war: that such an outcome must destroy all hope of that ultimate South African Federation on which Gladstone was so firmly set.

Impressed by this advice, Gladstone surrendered to expediency. The Colonial Secretary announced that 'sovereignty over the Transvaal could not be relinquished', and hoped that 'the speedy accomplishment of confederation' would 'enable free institutions to be conferred with promptitude'. This was a feeble compromise: an attempt to establish in the Transvaal in 1880 the state of affairs to which its inhabitants had looked when they first invited the British to come in. In 1877 if it could have been applied it would have set up in South Africa a Home Rule very like the Home Rule Gladstone hoped to see in Ireland. But it could not be applied.

It might have worked in 1877; in 1880 it came too late. 'The men on the spot' were altogether wrong in their estimate of Boer psychology. In the autumn of 1880 the Boers refused to pay their taxes, and serious disturbances followed. Still the High Commissioner assured the Colonial Secretary that there was no cause for anxiety; and the Commander-in-Chief seized the occasion to reduce the British garrison.

In December the Boers assembled in a monster

Convention at Paardekraal. To a man they declared for a restoration of the Transvaal Republic. There was a general rising all over the country. In a few days the entire territory outside of a few posts held by seventeen hundred and fifty-nine scattered British soldiers was in insurgent hands.

Never was British Colonial incompetence more manifest. While the armed commandos were ranging the Transvaal, the Colonial civil servants were devising an involved plan to placate Boer opinion by discussing a projected railway to Delagoa Bay to be surveyed after a hypothetical convention with the Portuguese authorities.

When, on the eve of the outbreak, the acting British Governor at Cape Town was warned that things looked black, his message to London, either because 'a wire had broken' or because somebody thought that a general would do something he did not do, arrived at Whitehall by the slow post a fortnight after the outbreak it was designed to avert.

All through January 1881 chance after chance of a peaceful settlement miscarried as one civil servant after another submitted the files to his chief's consideration. On the 29th a British force under Sir George Colley, advancing from Natal to relieve the Transvaal garrisons, was checked at Laing's Nek in Natal territory.

Colley persisted in rejecting all advice to use caution in his negotiations and in his tactics. He told the Government that he would give no consideration to the insurgent leaders. Gladstone awoke at last to the calibre of the 'men on the spot'. He remarked that 'Colley with a vengeance counts his chickens before they are hatched'. He noted 'his line is singularly wide of ours'. He ordered the general to give reasonable guarantees to the Boer leaders if they would desist from armed resistance. In the meantime Colley had again been repulsed in the field on the 8th of February at the Ingogo River.

Four days afterwards the Boers opened negotiations. They were still conciliatory. Such was their faith in the Gladstone Government, they said, that they would be quite ready to suspend hostilities while a Royal Commission was sent to inquire into their grievances.

Gladstone instructed Colley to tell them that if they would stop fighting the Government would suspend all hostilities and would send out its Commissioners to agree upon an arrangement satisfactory to both sides.

Colley duly passed these proposals on to the Boers, but before they could answer him there was a disastrous clash between the opposing forces. On the night of 26th February the British general anticipated a Boer move forward to occupy commanding ground on his flank. Colley marched out with three hundred and fifty-nine of his men and occupied a crest called Majuba Hill. Next morning the Boers scaled the hill from every side. Their expert marksmanship dislodged the British after a sharp action in which Colley himself was killed, with ninety of his men.

The following day Kruger—the Boer President—still ignorant of the tragedy on Majuba Hill, received Colley's letter containing Gladstone's offer and sent off his acceptance of it by return.

For Gladstone the predicament was now terrible. Public opinion, or at any rate the more vocal part of it, backed up the opposition clamour that three British defeats in a month must not go unavenged. Sir Evelyn Wood, who had succeeded Colley in the Transvaal, thought that 'the happiest [*sic*] result would be that after a successful battle, which he hoped to fight in about a fortnight, the Boers would disperse'. 'I can humanly speaking promise victory', he telegraphed home. 'Sir G. Colley never engaged more than six companies; I shall use twenty and two regiments of cavalry.' (He did not reckon that one day it was to take several hundred companies and more regiments of cavalry than

were mentioned in all the Army List of 1884 three years to obtain the 'happy result' he so sanguinely foretold.)

Gladstone may have sensed it. It was not for him, with his memories of the wastage of warfare, to embark on that colossal struggle which was soon to cost Britain twenty thousand lives. By no conceivable code could an offer honourably made and honourably accepted be repudiated to satisfy the offended dignity of a few generals. Gladstone had given way to the 'men on the spot' once too often; this time he would follow his own judgment. He was not going to have another Ireland in the Transvaal. He would be done with an adventure discreditable in its origin and inglorious in its conduct. The soldiers fought as hard against Gladstone as they had ever fought against the Boers. They argued pathetically that since this was the first war to be fought against Europeans since the invention of the breach-loader, it was extremely desirable that the war should be fought on to give the men a chance to get confidence in their new weapon.

The Queen reminded him that 'she always objected to the convention with the Boers of the Transvaal', and hoped 'we shall not now abandon our rights to satisfy the demands of a few agitators'.

Confident of his course, the Prime Minister forged ahead. An armistice was signed and negotiations were begun.

In 1884 the London Convention restored the Transvaal State to be the South African Republic. The second part of Lord Beaconsfield's legacy had at last been liquidated and Britain had one liability the less.

IV

Gladstone's anxiety to be quit of his trouble in South Africa was intensified by the serious problems which at the same time faced him in North Africa.

Athwart the Nile, Egypt lay like the broken tomb of some forgotten Pharaoh at once repelling the inquirer by the tortuous darkness of its approach, and enticing him by the gleam of treasures dimly disclosed within. For the last forty years it had ceased to be part of the Turkish Empire in all but name. A succession of pashas, some of them demoniacally energetic, others profoundly languid, some of them fired with the vision of Mohammed, others sunk in the fatalism of Omar Khayyám, had sucked the life-blood from the country and drained it of its last piastre.

The end came with Khedive Ismail in the mid 1870's. In an heroic attempt to amalgamate the dreams of the *Arabian Nights* with the visions of Jules Verne he had sailed forth upon an ocean of extravagance. For himself there were 'pavilions of silk and gold encrusted with hyacinths and emeralds, rubies and sapphires, curtains wrought with fine gold, precious marbles and carved woods, and hammams scented like the heart of a rose-tree'; to his country he gave railways, harbour works, lighthouses, telegraphs, breakwaters, a new system of education, a remodelled customs, a model postal service and the Suez Canal. Cosmopolitan financiers, international banking houses, and European contractors waited on his commands like ever-obliging djinns. His efforts to pay them all broke him. He squeezed the last handful of millet out of his starving fellahin; he mortgaged the ungathered taxes for years ahead; and he sold his last asset—his own shares in the Suez Canal—to crafty Lord Beaconsfield for something less than £4 million. Then came a flutter among all the foreign bondholders. A scream for the putting of Egypt's house in order was sent up from every Western capital, and the shrillest notes could be detected on the London Stock Exchange and the Paris Bourse. The occasion was fortunate; for no statesman could be more susceptible to these influences than Lord Beaconsfield.

France and England combined to take over Egypt like a bankrupt company. They set up a dual control; a Frenchman to superintend expenditure, and an Englishman to control revenue. They internationalized the Port of Alexandria and the Egyptian railways. And they took over the administration of the Khedival lands. To escape the dual control, Ismail agreed to a Constitution with British and French advisers, but in a few months he got tired of the Constitutional Cabinet and induced his officers to turn it out. This was too much for France and England. They persuaded the Sultan of Turkey to assert his nominal authority and depose the Khedive. So the Sultan telegraphed a notice of dismissal to the 'ex-Khedive Ismail'. The 'ex-Khedive' retired to Naples with three hundred wives; and his son Tewfik reigned in his stead.

Tewfik was a puppet of France and England, and back came the dual control. It was almost the last flicker of Lord Beaconsfield's expiring Jingoism to agree with France in 1879 that the two Governments would not tolerate the political influence in Egypt of any power besides themselves; and that, if need be, they would take common action to preserve their own position.

Next year, when Gladstone and the Liberals came into power, the new Government found itself enmeshed in the webs of Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy in Egypt, just as in Afghanistan and the Transvaal. Just as in Afghanistan and the Transvaal it did its best to limit the consequences. Gladstone officially informed the British agent at Cairo that the Cabinet desired to uphold Egyptian independence, adding that nothing short of a state of anarchy in Egypt would force them to interfere with it.

Unfortunately, a state of anarchy was the very thing that Gladstone had to face. Lord Beaconsfield's bondholder friends with their dual control and their puppet Khedive had done more than any Sultan for the cause

of Egyptian freedom. For several months past French and British visitors sitting over their coffee on the veranda of Shepheard's Hotel had watched a handsome figure ride past on a white horse with half Cairo cheering at his heels. Word ran like fire in stubble that Arabi Pasha, the Khedive's new War Minister, the peasant general, was going to drive the foreigners away and free Egypt for the Egyptians. The movement gathered momentum. The army followed Arabi; the Khedive dared not withstand him. All through 1881 the situation grew more and more critical.

Unfortunately, Gladstone was misled. He was told that Arabi's national movement was no more than a rising of the army. He let the French persuade him that the Khedive's authority must at all costs be upheld. And in January 1882 he subscribed to a joint note announcing that Britain and France would maintain Tewfik's position. But the British Ambassador was instructed to tell the French Government that Britain was as opposed as ever to direct intervention.

The state of Egypt was dangerous. Anti-foreign feeling boiled and Christians were flying for their lives. 'Anarchy' was daily coming nearer. All through the spring of 1882 Gladstone tried hard to persuade the powers of Europe to combine in an international operation to restore some semblance of order and security to the country. For one reason or another the powers declined. He invited the Sultan to reassert his sovereignty; but the Sultan temporized and the Europeans in Egypt trembled for their lives. In May 1882 an Anglo-French squadron anchored off Alexandria.

In June there was a riot in the city. The British Consul was dragged out of his carriage, dangerously wounded and only just rescued. Forty people were massacred, some of them French and British subjects. Arabi's supporters started to erect defences and to point batteries at the British ships. The French, fearing lest

any further action on their part would entail a war with Egypt, on which they were not willing to embark, withdrew their ships and left the British Fleet alone in the Bay.

It was a most awkward position for Gladstone. He had no wish to interfere in Egypt, but non-interference now meant leaving the country to Arabi and the Christians to a general massacre. There was no longer time to weigh principles, he must act. On the 3rd July the British admiral was told to inform Arabi that if his operations were not suspended his earthworks and batteries would be destroyed. Arabi ignored the ultimatum and on the 11th July the British Fleet bombarded Alexandria from seven in the morning until half-past five in the evening.

The operation was hardly a glorious one, and Gladstone's best friends were among his most vigorous critics. John Bright, who was Chancellor of the Duchy, resigned. 'The House knows', he said, 'that for forty years at least I have endeavoured to teach my countrymen . . . that the moral law is intended not only for individual life but for . . . States in their dealings with one another . . . There has been a manifest violation . . . of the moral law. It is impossible for me to give my support to it.'

Yet it is hard to see what else Gladstone could have done. He had inherited a very difficult position in Egypt. He had appealed to the powers, the Sultan, and the Khedive. One massacre had occurred and many more were threatened. As he told the House: 'We should not discharge our duty if we did not endeavour to convert the present interior state of Egypt from anarchy and conflict to peace and order.' Events showed how justified he had been.

A flag of truce was hoisted on Alexandria and Arabi withdrew his forces from the town. For two days and nights there was rioting and burning and throat-cutting. Two thousand Europeans were slain, and buildings were

burned by the mob simply because the hated foreigner had been wont to admire them.

Arabi retreated to the interior. Once again Gladstone appealed to the Sultan and then to the powers to join in restoring order. And once again they all refused. There was no alternative but for Britain to act alone. The life of every European in the country was in jeopardy and the Suez Canal was threatened. In September, Sir Garnet Wolseley landed with thirteen thousand men and sixty guns to march on Cairo. On the 13th at Tel-el-Kebir the red-coats (it was the last appearance of the old uniform in the field) routed Arabi's national army and captured all his guns. The Khedive was brought back to his capital breathing threats of vengeance. He would put Arabi to death; he would make himself secure from all rebellious subjects by enlisting a bodyguard of Albanians or Austrians or Swiss (he found it difficult to decide which).

But Gladstone put his foot down firmly. The minor rebels were set free. There were no executions; and no Albanian bodyguards. And Arabi retired on parole and pension to Ceylon.

V

We've fought with many men acrost the seas,
An' some of 'em was brave an' some was not;
The Paythan an' the Zulu an' Burmese;
But the Fuzzy was the finest of the lot.
We never got a ha'porth's change of 'im:
'E squatted in the scrub an' 'ocked our 'orses,
'E cut our sentries up at Suakim,
An' 'e played the cat an' banjo with our forces.
So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin'
man.

While the Highland Brigade was sweeping over Arabi's trenches at Tel-el-Kebir 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy' was streaming from all quarters of the Sudan to the green

banner of his prophet the Mahdi at El Obeid in Kordofan. The Sudan was a province twice as big as France and Germany put together, lying between the southern boundary of Egypt and the equator. The Egyptians had ruled it for sixty years and ruled it extraordinarily badly. Seedy Coptic and Levantine clerks kept the Khedive's crooked account-books in the counting-houses at Khartoum. Bands of hired Bashi Bazouks, with lance and whip, descended at intervals on the wretched villagers to carry off their corn and chickens, their wives and children. They were Egypt's tax-collectors. But thorough as their methods were, the fruits of their visitations were not sufficient for their masters at Cairo. So the revenue was further supplemented by the sale of licences to Arab traders to raid the country for slaves, each within his stipulated area.

There is a tradition in the Mohammedan world that one day a prophet, a Mahdi, will arise upon whose coming the world will be converted to Islam. Early in the autumn of 1881 word flew round the Sudan that the Mahdi was come. He was a boat-builder from Seenar, named Mohamet Ahmed, and it was his mission, he said, first to win the Sudan, then to march on Egypt, drive out the heretic Turk, and convert the whole world, slaying all who opposed his mission. Points one and two of this programme were quite enough for a Sudan exasperated by Egyptian misrule; and when the Mahdi's banner was raised the fuzzy-headed peasants almost to a man flocked with their spears and their coffin-shaped shields to follow where he led.

By the time that Arabi's cry of 'Egypt for the Egyptian' had been silenced and the Khedive put back upon his throne, the cry of 'Sudan for the Sudanese' had begun to penetrate to Whitehall. It was clear that England's protégé, the Khedive, was faced in the Sudan with a national revolt on the widest scale.

Gladstone was not the man to put it down for him.

It was not to be expected that the statesman who had lately roused England to the atrocities of Bashi Bazouks in Bulgaria was likely to countenance their misdeeds in the Sudan. To Gladstone the Sudanese were 'a people rightly struggling to be free'. 'During all my political life,' he was able to say, looking back on these years, 'I am thankful to say that I have never opened my lips in favour of a domination such as that which has been exercised upon certain countries by certain other countries, and I am not going now to begin. I look upon the possession of the Sudan as the calamity of Egypt.' The Liberal Cabinet was firm in its refusal to support the Khedive's abominable methods with British life and treasure. In November 1882 Gladstone announced his Cabinet's policy in categorical terms: 'It is no part of the duty incumbent upon us to restore order in the Sudan. It is politically connected with Egypt in consequence of its very recent conquest; but it has not been included within the sphere of our operations.'

As Britain would not act for him, the Khedive had to act for himself. In 1883, a retired Bombay colonel, William Hicks, took over the remains of Arabi's army—many of whom were brought to the base in chains. Following on some preliminary successes Hicks Pasha was instructed to restore order in Kordofan, the focal point of the rising. Accordingly he marched off that September with ten thousand men and thirteen European officers.

It was a lonely expedition. 'Nine thousand infantry that fifty good men would rout in ten minutes, one thousand Bashi Bazouks that never learnt to ride . . . not worth the ammunition they throw away.' Happy-go-lucky Egyptian officials at Cairo, boasting in bad French, had no idea of the extent of the Mahdi's movement. And Gladstone held severely aloof. 'H.M. Government are in no way responsible for the operations in the Sudan, which have been undertaken under

the authority of the Egyptian Government, or for the appointment or actions of General Hicks.'

At the end of September pathetic messages reached Cairo. It was very hot, and there was no water. Then no messages came. October ended, November began, and there was still no news. The expedition was wandering through the forests south of El Obeid, tricked by its Sudanese guides, and panting for want of water. On the 5th November the guides stole away. The exhausted men had become listless and discipline broke down. Then the Mahdi's dervishes came bounding through the undergrowth, and it was all over. With all his men dead and dying round him Hicks led his staff in a last hopeless charge and fell pierced by the spear of the Mahdi's Khalifa. All was confusion in the Sudan.

Sir Evelyn Baring (he was afterwards Lord Cromer), the British Consul-General at Cairo, reported to London 'the most important question is whether the Egyptian Government will be able to maintain Khartoum. . . . General Stephenson, Sir Evelyn Wood, and General Baker are of one opinion. They consider . . . it impossible. . . . I leave out of account the contingency of dispatching forces belonging to Her Majesty the Queen or His Imperial Majesty the Sultan.' On the 13th December the reply came through. 'Her Majesty's Government have no intention of employing British or Indian troops in the Sudan . . .' and 'recommend the Ministers of the Khedive . . . to abandon all territory south of Assouan or at least of Wady-Halfa.'

Gladstone's decision left only one course to the Khedive: he must evacuate the Sudan, seeing that without Britain he had neither the men nor the money to keep it. 'Were we twice as strong as we are we could not hold Khartoum against the whole country, which without a doubt are one and all against us', telegraphed the officer on the spot.

In England Gladstone's policy was the signal for one

of the most serious attacks he had to face. On the 12th February a vote of censure was moved in both Houses. Lord Salisbury tried to load the Gladstone Government with responsibility for all that had happened; but rather significantly nobody suggested that the Sudan could or should be held. Outside the interested circles of the Khedive's Government every expert, civil and military, was agreed on this. 'Save in respect to one sin of omission,' says Lord Cromer, 'that no veto was imposed on the Hicks expedition, the British Government are in no way responsible for the loss of the Sudan. . . . Their decision was ratified by British public opinion; neither am I aware that any one who could speak with real authority was found . . . to challenge its wisdom.'

One man who certainly did not challenge its wisdom was General Charles Gordon. He had been Governor-General of the Sudan only six years before under Ismail Pasha, where his activity against the slave-traders had almost made Egypt popular. But he had resigned. He was fifty, had served in the Crimea and later under the Emperor of China, who had rewarded his gallantry with the Yellow Jacket, the highest decoration he could bestow. He had held important posts in the Royal Engineers before surveying Equatorial Africa for the Khedive, who appointed him Governor-General of the Sudan, a post which he had relinquished after an abortive mission to the King of Abyssinia had ended in his arrest.

Gordon joined (22nd January 1884) the chorus that approved evacuation. 'The Sudan ever was and ever will be', he told Lord Granville, 'a useless possession.' And he thought Gladstone 'fully justified in recommending evacuation, inasmuch as the sacrifices necessary towards securing good government would be far too onerous to admit of such an attempt being made'.

VI

'Holding Khartoum is bosh', wrote the British representative there. 'This is indeed a land of desolation. We must give it up.'

After the defeat of Hicks, the Sudan had been wholly lost to Egypt, and Egypt had neither the men nor the money to re-conquer it without foreign help. Only two countries could conceivably have extended it: Turkey and Britain. The last thing the Egyptians seriously wanted was to call in the Turk, for they knew that once in he would never go out again. As for Great Britain, Gladstone had stated her policy of non-intervention quite clearly. He knew that if Britain were to re-conquer the Sudan Britain would have to hold it. He knew too that his countrymen would never tolerate the loss of life that such a course involved. There was no alternative for the Egyptian Government but to withdraw its garrisons, including that at Khartoum, as quickly as possible. 'Whatever else may be said against Mr. Gladstone's Government,' says Lord Cromer, 'they deserve the eternal gratitude of the Egyptian people for coming down with a heavy hand on the Cairene administrators and obliging the Egyptian Government to look the facts in the face.'

To extricate the isolated garrisons in the Sudan was going to be a delicate and dangerous operation. Unfortunately, 'the very man for the job' happened to be out of one at the moment. Charles George Gordon had a mystical feeling that, as he told Lord Granville, 'he could by his personal influence excite the tribes to escort the garrison and inhabitants of Khartoum to Suakim on the Red Sea'. General Gordon was always having such mystic feelings, and they were very often verified in the event. They had enabled him to put down a revolution in China in 1863 almost single-handed and carrying only a riding-cane. They had brought him out of the

most impossible situations in the Sudan by the sheer force of his own personality. They had even impelled him to think he could settle the Irish question, and Members of Parliament had been found who wanted to entrust him with it. On this occasion 'Chinese' Gordon's mystical belief in his mission seemed to have spread to the British public. In public-houses, in club smoking-rooms, in newspaper offices, every one began to state with terrific emphasis that they were sure Gordon was the man, and the less they knew about the position the more sure they were. No dervish believed more fervently and more irrationally in the Mahdi than Queen Victoria and the man in the street believed in General Gordon.

Where the situation was better appreciated the same opinion was not held. 'The more I thought of it,' wrote Sir Evelyn Baring from Cairo, 'the less was I inclined to send Gordon, or indeed any Englishman, to Khartoum. . . .' 'I knew something of General Gordon's erratic character. . . .' 'My objections . . . were in some degree based on General Gordon's personal unfitness to undertake the work.' But 'I only dwelt on the objections entertained by the Egyptian Government, which were reasonable . . . that the appointment of a Christian would probably alienate the tribes who remain faithful'.

Gladstone was strongly opposed to sending Gordon out, but popular emotion skilfully stirred up by party journalists rose to fever pitch. 'The English', as Lord Beaconsfield had remarked, 'are the most emotional people in Europe.' And Lord Salisbury, then Conservative leader in the House of Lords, said, 'It is easier to combat with the rinderpest or the cholera than with the popular sentiment.' Twice Sir Evelyn Baring, with the most expert advice available, turned down an offer of Gordon's services. 'Would that I had done so a third time!' he remarks. But the third request was too pressing and he gave way.

Gladstone, too, had given way against his better sense to the pressure of the whole country from the Queen downwards, but only under conditions which he believed would safeguard the country from Gordon and Gordon from himself. 'While his opinion on the Sudan may be of great value, must we not be very careful that he does not shift the centre of gravity as to political and military responsibility for that country? If he reports what should be done, he should not be the judge who should do it. Nor ought he to commit us on that point by advice officially given.'

On the 18th January 1884 the plunge was taken, and Gordon set out. It was a triumphal departure. The *Pall Mall Gazette* declared that the appointment was 'applauded enthusiastically by the Press all over the country without distinction of party'. Lord Cairns informed a cheering House of Lords that the general was 'one of our national treasures'. At Charing Cross Station Lord Granville took his ticket. Lord Wolseley carried his bag. The Duke of Cambridge (the old Commander-in-Chief) held open the carriage door. And a cheering crowd speeded the 8 a.m. on its way to Death and Glory.

'Why this was *not* done long ago, and why the right thing is never done till it is absolutely extorted from those who are in authority is inexplicable', wrote the Queen.

Buoyed up by faith in his mission, Gordon went on to Cairo 'to do what I like and what God in His mercy may direct me to do. He is the Governor-General, and I am only His useless agent by whom He deigns to work His will. . . . We are pianos. Events play on us. Gladstone is no more important in the events of life than we are. The importance is how he acts when played on.'

When he got to Cairo at the end of the month he met Sir Evelyn Baring, who found it 'impossible not to be charmed by the simplicity and honesty of Gordon's

character'. ' . . . My only fear is that he is terribly flighty and changes his opinions very rapidly.' As Gordon himself noted, 'I know if I was chief I would never employ myself, for I am incorrigible. To men . . . who weigh every word I must be perfect poison.'

On the 22nd January Gordon began his work by suggesting that a former slave-hunter in the Sudan, by name Zobeir, who was under restraint in Cairo for his part in a former rebellion, should be instantly deported to Cyprus. On the 25th Gordon got a 'mystic feeling' that Zobeir must be trusted to the extent of coming as his lieutenant to Khartoum. Only the stern veto of the Liberal Cabinet, stimulated by the protest of the Anti-Slavery Society, prevented the scheme from being carried out.

On the 18th February Gordon reached Khartoum. He had hardly got there before he wrote to Sir Evelyn Baring asking that Zobeir be made Governor-General of the Sudan and given the K.C.M.G.

The moment he left Cairo the general started to send a spate of contradictory messages to Sir Evelyn Baring, and when his companion, Colonel Stuart, remonstrated that this might be confusing, he replied that he was 'merely giving different aspects of the same question'.

Unfortunately, this passion for 'different aspects of the same question' ruined the prospects of his mission before he had got to Khartoum. The Khedive had issued a secret firman announcing his intention to abandon the Sudan. In London, Gordon had stressed the need for absolute secrecy about it. When he got as far up the Nile as Berber the other aspect of the question overcame him and he disclosed the firman to a meeting of tribal chiefs. A comparison between the General Gordon in January and General Gordon in February will show the difficulty with which Gladstone had to contend:

8th January 1884

'There is one subject which I cannot imagine any one differing about. That is the impolicy of announcing our intention to evacuate Khartoum. Even if we were bound to do so we should have said nothing about it. The moment it is known we have given up the game, every man will go over to the Mahdi. All men worship the rising sun. The difficulties of evacuation will be enormously increased, if, indeed, the withdrawal of our garrison is not rendered impossible.'

13th February 1884

'In the afternoon of February 13th, Gordon assembled all the influential men of the province and showed them the secret firman. The reading of this document caused great excitement, but at the same time its purport was received evidently with much gratification. It is worthy of note that the whole of the notables present at this meeting subsequently threw in their cause with the Mahdi.'

The secret let out at Berber travelled speedily over the Sudan. In due time it reached the Mahdi, who never saw more than one aspect of any question. 'What is the use', he proclaimed, 'of supporting a Pasha [Gordon] who is going next day to give the Sudan up?' His logic prevailed with the tribes who were still loyal to the Khedive. They went over in a body, and before Gordon had been three months in Khartoum he was to find that his late audience at Berber had severed his communication down the Nile to Cairo.

VII

At Khartoum Gordon was received with acclamation (18th February). For a moment it seemed as if his mystic feeling had not deceived him. Once more that strange erratic personality put forth its magnetism upon a native people. Inscrutable and unaccountable as Providence itself, he held Khartoum in his hand. The Sudanese in the city served him as faithfully as the Sudanese outside it served the Mahdi. And in his

presence the feeble soldiers of the Khedive were moved to quit themselves like men. He cancelled the bonds of the usurers. He remitted the burdensome taxes. He walked about the prisons, striking the irons off the captives. 'Everything is now safe here for troops and Europeans,' telegraphed the British Consul; 'he is giving the people more than they expected from the Mahdi.' And Gordon himself assured Sir Evelyn Baring that he need 'not give himself any further anxiety about this part of the Sudan'.

Then, all of a sudden, Charles Gordon, the man who all his life had fought slavery, issued a Proclamation to the people of Khartoum:

'Knowing your regret at the severe measures taken by the Government for the suppression of the slave traffic, and the seizure and punishment of all concerned, according to the Convention and Decrees, I confer upon you these rights, that henceforth none shall interfere with your property; whoever has slaves, shall have full right to their services and full control over them. This Proclamation is a proof of my clemency towards you.'

In Khartoum they applauded. In London they were profoundly shocked. The Anti-Slavery Society and the Nonconformist opinion behind the Government raised an outcry. All through the land the opposition seized the chance to embarrass the Government. To loud cheers from the Conservative benches Sir Stafford Northcote demanded whether 'General Gordon's powers extended to the issue of such a Proclamation'. Gladstone warned the House to beware of interfering with General Gordon's plans; and even the *Pall Mall Gazette* had to admit that the Government stood by their agent with commendable courage.

But Gordon was not so loyal to Gladstone as Gladstone was to Gordon. There was more behind his change of

front on slavery than a mere desire to gain time for the evacuation of the Khartoum garrison. It soon became obvious that Gordon's object was not to organize a withdrawal but to 'smash up' the Mahdi. The chance to gain a great triumph for God and the Queen was too much for a brain steeped in faith in the Old Testament and in his own mission.

He would not have been Charles Gordon if he had not had a dozen mutually contradictory plans for accomplishing his project. First he played with the idea of setting up an anti-Mahdist Government in the Sudan; it was for this that he had wanted Zobeir. Then he had a scheme for handing over parts of the country to the King of the Belgians with himself as Viceroy. Later he recurred with increasing emphasis to the idea of calling in Turkish troops. 'I feel that once the Sudan is taken you may expect a crop of troubles in all Moslem States. . . . Put your pride in your pocket, get by good pay three thousand Turkish infantry and one thousand Turkish cavalry. . . . The affair would be accomplished in four months.' . . . 'Our choice lies between Zobeir and the Turks. . . . Therefore give the country to the Turks. If I was Lord Wolseley I would make Her Majesty's Government send the Turks. They would keep the Sudan. Give them £2,000,000. . . .' 'The only possible solution is the Sultan, let the subsidy be what it may.' To Cairo he telegraphed that it was 'impossible to leave Khartoum without a regular Government established by some power'.

But all the time there lay at the back of his mind the idea that if he could only hold on to Khartoum long enough he could force Gladstone's hand. In the end British public opinion would insist on an expedition to save their hero. 'I expect Her Majesty's Government are in a precious rage with me for holding out and forcing their hand', he wrote.

But Gordon miscalculated—twice. His influence was

not as great as he thought. He was not a rival Mahdi. His personal magnetism did not stretch beyond the walls of Khartoum. He had believed that the rebel tribes would not leave their territories; and that the neighbouring tribes were under the spell of his own personality. The rebel tribes did leave their territories, and the neighbouring tribes went over to the Mahdi.

On the 26th May the Khedive's garrison at Berber surrendered to the enemy. Gordon's line of communication down the Nile was cut.

Then his second miscalculation took effect. He had believed that the British Government would be compelled to send an expedition to relieve him at once. He had not reckoned with Gladstone. The Prime Minister was not going to be stampeded. He did not think the Sudan worth the life of a single British soldier. He had only consented to Gordon's mission in the belief that it would prevent bloodshed. It was intolerable that it should be used to bring bloodshed about. He suspected that Gordon was only hanging on to make difficulties and provoke a war. And these suspicions were certainly confirmed when he read a telegram from the General to Sir Evelyn Baring printed in a London newspaper:

'As far as I can understand, the situation is this: you state your intention of not sending any relief up here or to Berber, and you refuse me Zobeir. I consider myself free to act according to circumstances. I shall hold out here as long as I can, and if I can suppress the rebellion I shall do so. If I cannot, I shall retire to the Equator, and leave you the indelible disgrace of abandoning the garrisons of Sennar, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola, with the certainty that you will eventually be forced to smash up the Mahdi under great difficulties if you would retain peace in Egypt.'

'Gladstone took up the paper; his eye instantly fell on the telegram, and he read it through. As he read, his face hardened and whitened, the eyes burned as I have seen them once or twice in the House of Commons when he was angered—burned with a deep fire, as if they would have consumed the sheet on which Gordon's message was printed, or as if Gordon's words had burnt into his soul, which was looking out in wrath and flame. He said not a word. For perhaps two or three minutes he sat still, his face all the while like the face you may read of in Milton—like none other I ever saw. Then he rose, still without a word, and was seen no more that morning.'

To him the position was clear. Gordon was asking for lives to be sacrificed to extricate him from his position. Gordon could perfectly easily extricate himself without the loss of a single life, by coming home. Time and again Gladstone had instructed him that he was free to return by any one of several routes, but instead of returning he stayed there spinning one fantastic project after another to avoid carrying out the simple mission on which he had been sent.

VIII

But to Gordon things looked very different. The whole Sudan was up in arms for the Mahdi. The last Egyptian garrisons had been overwhelmed. The enemy had closed in upon Khartoum from every side. The fourteen thousand inhabitants saw one thing only standing between them and massacre, rape, and slavery—General Charles Gordon. He had only one fellow-British officer, but between them they dominated the city: digging earthworks, making cartridges, raking in food from every quarter and distributing it out to everybody except themselves. It was Gordon who sent the little steamers chugging along the Nile spluttering out

the last shots that were fired for Egypt. It was Gordon who kept up the heart of the people by devising orders and medals which he conferred upon the bravest of them. It was Gordon who, when money ran out, issued a currency of his own in little notes that no man hesitated to honour. 'Weakened and reduced to extremities God in His mercy sent Gordon Pasha to us in the midst of our calamities of the siege and we should all have perished of hunger and been destroyed. But . . . sustained by his intelligence and skill we have been preserved till now.' They obeyed him, trusted him, followed him; they treasured him and watched over him. Charles Gordon would not abandon them.

Gladstone, too, was holding out against a siege. The rising tide of popular passion was beating all about him. It was a struggle between them now. Who should hold out longer—Gordon against the Mahdi or Gladstone against the world? And to Gladstone the ordeal was more than an old and tired man could bear. Gordon's life or the lives of a hundred others. He must make the choice—he to whom the sacrifice of any life was intolerable. In England opinion was lashed into fury. At the end of March he had carried the Cabinet against an expedition. But even Ministers have constituencies and the electors were dangerously impatient. In the first week in April the Cabinet voted on the expedition again, six in favour, five against, and this time Gladstone was in the minority.

So the decision was made. Gordon had won the tussle. There was still time to save him. But now the soldiers had the matter in hand. It had been easy for the most junior subaltern in mess to curse the politicians for holding things up while every minute added to Gordon's danger. But now that the soldiers had been told to get to work it seemed impossible to find two generals who agreed as to what should be done. All that summer at the War Office and the Staff College they

discussed this route and that route and shallows and cataracts and columns and camels and distances and water-supplies. Not until July was almost out did they agree that the route up the Nile was the 'easiest, safest, and cheapest' to follow.

Then the House of Commons had to pass a vote of credit; then they had to find a general; then the general had to get to Cairo. And it was not until the 9th September that Sir Garnet Wolseley was ready to advance.

In Khartoum it had become an open secret that we 'have neither money nor food' and 'the matches used for the mines were all finished. . . .' 'Cursed is the man that trusteth in man!' cried Gordon in his bitterness. With all possible speed the relieving army pressed on.

On the 5th October Wolseley was at Wady-Halfa. But Gordon had endured many months of it and the strain had worn him white. "'Tis enough to kill a fellow. I can't keep my eyes open. I would give a shilling for an hour's sleep.' 'Thankless is the task of the man who serves his country. . . . England expects (does not even thank) you will do your duty.'

Then Wolseley's difficulties began. He had eight hundred whalers to carry the men; Canadian *voyageurs* to negotiate the rapids; and West African Kroo-men to carry the stores. But the Nile was still an unknown river. And from Wady-Halfa to Khartoum it is more than nine hundred miles. Nine hundred miles upstream, against rapids, shifting sand-banks, and rocky barriers. Every conceivable difficulty beset the relieving force. There was not a pilot to be had. The paddle-boats had to be dragged with ropes across six cataracts. As time grew shorter and shorter progress became maddeningly slower. It was not until Christmas Day (1884) that the Army had pushed its way to Korti. Christmas Day, and at Khartoum Gordon had nearly given up hope.

'Now mark this, if the Expeditionary Force does not come in ten days the town may fall and I have done my best for the honour of our country. Good-bye.'

From Korti to Khartoum by river it is five hundred miles. Gordon could not last out the time that journey was bound to take. Hastily, Wolseley consulted with his officers.

A force was dispatched to strike across the desert to Gubat, one hundred and sixty miles away. That would save a big bend of the Nile. But Sir Herbert Stewart's desert column, eleven hundred strong, floundered forward slowly. There were not enough camels. The desert wells must be guarded and the transport had to double and treble its journey to supply the guards. At Abu Klea the tribesmen fired on them with rifles they had taken from Hicks' vanquished army, and there it was that Fuzzy-Wuzzy broke the British square.

Not till the 21st of January did the column reach Gubat at last. Four of Gordon's steamers from Khartoum were waiting for them. But the steamers had to be repaired. It was thought advisable to send off a detachment to Berber to discover the position there, and Berber from Gubat lies in the opposite direction to Khartoum. Three days (vital days they turned out to be) passed before they were on the move again.

Finally, on the morning of the 24th, two steamers with three hundred and sixty men of the desert column aboard set off up the last stretch of the Nile to Khartoum. Heavy fire from both banks delayed them as they went; a steamer ran aground. Not till the 28th did the white houses of the city come in sight, ominously silent, empty, and shuttered. For they were just two days late. There was no flag flying on Government House, and as the steamers drew nearer officers anxiously peering from their field-glasses on deck could see that the building was an empty ruin.

From the river-bank one mournful, lonely voice was

heard crying out that the city had been taken and that Gordon Pasha was slain.

IX

*Queen Victoria to Mr. Gladstone**(Telegram)**5th February 1885*

‘These news from Khartoum are frightful and to think that all this might have been prevented and many precious lives saved by earlier action is too fearful.’

The telegram was not in cipher. Every clerk could read it.

‘Mr. Gladstone and the Government have, the Queen *feels it dreadfully*, Gordon’s innocent, noble, heroic blood on their consciences.’

Her subjects felt it also. Gladstone was abused for a murderer, a traitor, a heartless scoundrel. It was said that he had gone to the theatre the night he learned of the tragedy. It was quite untrue, but people believed it because they wanted to believe it. No longer should he be called G.O.M. (Grand Old Man), they said, but M.O.G. (Murderer of Gordon).

The M.O.G., when his life ebbs out,
Will ride in a fiery chariot,
And sit in state on a red-hot plate,
Between Satan and Judas Iscariot.

To all this Gladstone said very little. It was his considered view that ‘Gordon was a hero, and a hero of heroes; but we ought to have known that a hero of heroes is not the proper person to give effect at a distant point, and in most difficult circumstances, to the views of ordinary men. It was unfortunate that he should claim the hero’s privilege by turning upside down and

inside out every idea and intention with which he had left England, and for which he had obtained our approval. . . . My own opinion is that it is harder to justify our doing so much to rescue him than our not doing more.'

He might have said much more. That if he had murdered Gordon, Gordon had murdered the officers and men—three hundred of them—who perished on the expedition his obstinacy rendered necessary. That Gordon was vain, ill-balanced, and an intriguer. That as late as March 1884 he could easily have evacuated Khartoum.

But to the end Gladstone would rather suffer in silence than attack a brave man's memory.

In 1890 the United States Consul at Alexandria, Colonel Chaile-Long, formerly Chief of Staff to Gordon in the Sudan, who had every reason to know him well, was anxious to publish the true story of the whole affair. Long was a candid critic of the general and he wrote to Gladstone for his version of the story to lay before the world. But Gladstone would not tell it. 'Mr. Gladstone, with the magnanimity of a true statesman and the delicate feelings of a gentleman, declined to enter into any discussion on the subject', said Lord Cromer.

X

Gordon was a Cecil Rhodes who failed, one (perhaps the greatest) of the nineteenth-century imperial pioneers for whom the gunboat did not come in time. But these men were only the instruments of others less noble than themselves. Behind the high endeavour and the brave devotion of the Empire-builders lay the realistic calculations of cosmopolitan finance. From the bloodshed on Majuba Hill sprouted the exotic growth of the Kaffir boom. The charge of the Highland Brigade at Tel-el-Kebir effectively supported the market in Suez Canal shares.

All through this period of commercial imperialism Gladstone was steadfast in his refusal to employ the National Defence Forces for the acquisitive enterprises of profit-making syndicates and combines. When Gordon wrote that it was 'impossible to leave Khartoum without a regular Government' he was unconsciously making a statement that every speculator echoed. When Gladstone stood firm against the clamour of three Kingdoms that shouted for an expedition he was looking far beyond the beleaguered garrison at Khartoum.

For Gladstone belonged to an age that was not prepared to let a vested financial interest dabble in public policy. He had stood for the repeal of the Corn Laws when their retention was the interest of a powerfully entrenched minority. He had wanted to nationalize the newly born railways rather than allow the private exploitation of an essential service. He was consistent in carrying into the nineteenth century the eighteenth-century conception of the public need.

To the somewhat tawdry mid-Victorian Imperialism he applied the tests a Pitt or a patriot king might have brought to bear, and by those tests he found it wanting.

ORANGE

I

THE day that Lord Beaconsfield moved out of No. 10 Downing Street in 1880 a friend came to say good-bye. He talked gloomily of the future, of Austria, Russia, and Turkey, of the dreadful prospect of six years' Liberal Government. Dizzy listened patiently. Then in deep tones he pronounced the one word: '*Ireland!*'

II

Ireland was indeed desperate. The Land League was rotting the very fibre of law and order. In the last year of Gladstone's previous administration (1874), there had been 213 agrarian outrages; in 1880 there were 2,590. Evictions had risen from 2,571 to 10,457.

Gladstone perceived that he must try to do something at once for these wretched people, and in the early autumn of 1880 he hurried through the House of Commons a Bill to compensate some of the evicted tenants. In the House of Lords its reception was ominous. Certain Whig peers combined with the Conservative majority to throw it out. Lord Lansdowne resigned from the Government; the Duke of Argyll soon followed him. A tiny cloud had appeared on the Liberal horizon.

The rejection of this measure was decisive and disastrous. By the end of November Gladstone had to tell the Queen that the state of Ireland was menacing. In Galway there was now a policeman to every forty-seven men and a soldier for every ninety-seven, yet there was no staying the flood of murder and destruction.

What was worst of all was that the Irish leaders no longer discountenanced the violence of their followers. Far from it. In the House of Commons they were

employing precisely the tactics on which the Land League relied in Ireland to make the system of Government unworkable altogether.

Early in 1881 Irish obstruction was in full blast. In those days there was no closure of debate. When the Government introduced a Bill conferring emergency powers of imprisonment upon the Viceroy, the Irish determined to keep the debate going by continuing to speak either till the Government dropped the Bill or till they had completely upset the business of the House. After a sitting of twenty-four hours the Speaker decided to put the question from the Chair. This so infuriated the Irish that they all marched out of the Chamber in a body. But the Bill passed.

III

Having thus paved the way by giving the Irish executive full powers to deal with lawlessness, Gladstone proceeded to tackle constructively the grievances which immediately underlay the land agitation. In the summer of 1881 he introduced his second Land Bill. He based it on the famous three F's: Fair rent; Fixity of tenure; and Free sale.

The Bill provided that either landlord or tenant could apply to the County Court Judge or the Land Commission Court to fix the rent of a holding which was not to take account of a tenant's improvements. After fifteen years, during which the tenant could not be evicted, either party could apply to have the rent reassessed. The tenant could sell his holding as he pleased subject to the landlord's right of purchase at a price to be fixed by the Court. 'It was', an Irish patriot declared, 'a great and noble measure, a charter of freedom for the long-oppressed tenantry of Ireland.' But the very soundness of the Bill condemned it in the eyes of Parnell and his followers. They obstructed, though they dared not

oppose. They marched out on Second Reading without voting. For their American paymasters did not wish to see Ireland's grievances redressed; they wanted Ireland to be the means to destroy the British Empire. Even when the Bill was law, Parnell saw to it that it should be made unworkable. At a national convention of the Land League he moved a resolution to forbid any member to apply for the fixing of his rent without the consent of his local branch. Mr. T. P. O'Connor told a meeting in Kansas that 'Gladstone's policy was to fix a relation between the landlord and the tenant. The policy of the Land League was to abolish the relation. Gladstone's Act and the Land League were precisely of opposite principles.'

Gladstone, when he saw his Act ignored, was indignant and amazed. 'It is no small matter,' he declared, 'if Mr. Parnell desires to arrest the operation of the Act, to stand as Moses stood between the living and the dead, but to stand there not as Moses stood to arrest, but to spread the plague.' Liberal though he might be he was no man to watch unmoved while Parnell 'marched through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire'.

From Wexford Parnell grimly bade him do his worst. In October 1881 Gladstone put Parnell with all his chief lieutenants into Kilmainham Jail. The Land League answered with a 'no rent' manifesto, and Gladstone responded by proclaiming the Land League.

But the House of Lords and the Land League between them were putting an intolerable strain upon the old Prime Minister. Casting about for friends among so many enemies he implored Cardinal Newman to persuade the Pope to intercede to stop the daily bloodshed. 'My wish as regards Ireland in this hour of her peril, and her hope, is to leave nothing undone by which to give heart and strength to the hope and to abate the peril. But my wish as regards the Pope is that he should have

the means of bringing those for whom he is responsible to fulfil the elementary duties of citizenship. . . . Of Christianity . . . it is not for me to speak.' The Cardinal excused himself politely and in many words.

No help was to come from the prisoner in the Vatican. It came from the prisoner in Kilmainham Jail. Parnell had had time to reflect. In spite of everything Gladstone's new Land Act was proving an unqualified success. At the rate of nearly two thousand a week the tenants were thronging the Rent Courts. The most fiery oratory of the Land Leaguers could not convince the southern farmer that he was better off paying one pound an acre under the threat of eviction than fifteen shillings an acre with security of tenure. And Land League or no Land League to Court he went. The Ulstermen called the Land League's advice to boycott the Rent Courts 'clean daft'. Moreover, the ghastly state of the country, with its unending sequences of stabbing and shootings and burnings, was beginning to make even Parnell uneasy and a little ashamed. In April 1882 he got secretly in touch with the British Cabinet. The intermediary he chose for this delicate negotiation was one Captain O'Shea. Kitty, the captain's wife, was Parnell's mistress.

After a lot of coming and going the terms were agreed. Parnell undertook to do all he could to end the combat in Ireland; Gladstone agreed to release the Kilmainham prisoners. He also promised to safeguard the tenants against eviction for arrears of rent that had accrued before the passing of the Land Act. As a gesture of goodwill Gladstone appointed to the Chief Secretaryship a young Liberal aristocrat, Lord Hartington's brother. Lord Frederick Cavendish was a man of high principle and great ideals. It was felt both by Englishmen and Irishmen too that he symbolized the new and kindlier order it was hoped to begin.

On 2nd May 1882 the prisoners were set at liberty.

Four days later Parnell spoke his mind to his friends.

He 'talked of the state of the country, said it was dreadful, swore at everybody and spoke of anarchy like a British Minister bringing in a Coercion Bill. I never saw him so wild and angry', Davitt said.

That very afternoon Lord Frederick Cavendish and the Under-Secretary, Mr. Burke, were stabbed to death while walking home to the Viceregal Lodge in Phoenix Park.

The London season had just begun; it was Saturday night. The Gladstones were dining at the Austrian Embassy. After dinner they separated, she to attend a party at the Admiralty, he to walk to Downing Street. In the velvet twilight of the London spring the old man strolled across the spacious squares, past the big houses where the lights winked at the open windows. At last he came to his own door, No. 10. In the white-painted, circular entrance hall his secretary stood waiting. He told him the news from Dublin. Then at last even the old lion heart was shaken. 'It was as if he had been felled to the ground.'

IV

'I am stabbed in the back', exclaimed Parnell when they told him of the Phoenix Park murders. Fiercely he proclaimed that 'no act has ever been perpetrated in our country during the exciting struggles of the last fifty years that has so stained Ireland as this cowardly and unprovoked assassination of a friendly stranger'. Desperately he wrote to Gladstone offering to retire, to go out of public life. Around him the foundations of Ireland seemed to be giving way. It was 'a society on the eve of dissolution. The Invincibles roved with knives about the streets of Dublin. Discontent had been stirred in the ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and a dangerous rioting broke out in the Metropolitan Force. . . . The moral cowardice of what ought to have been the governing class was astounding. The landlords would hold

meetings and agree not to go beyond a certain abatement. Then they would go individually and privately offer the tenants a greater abatement. The sheriff would let the word get out that he was going to make a seizure and profess surprise that the cattle had vanished. The whole countryside turned out . . . to flaming meetings. . . . If a man did not attend, angry neighbours trooped up to know the reason why. The clergy hardly stirred a finger to restrain the storm.'

Gladstone could see that at such a moment conciliation would be fatal. Parnell had said more than once that without bludgeonings England would yield nothing; arguing that the Fenians had brought about the first Land Act and the Land League the second. Dillon, when he defended the boycott, said that if they submitted to law and order they would be swept away like flies from the face of the country.

Gladstone was determined to show them that they were wrong. A Crimes Act was passed, in the teeth of frantic obstruction from Parnell, empowering the new Lord Lieutenant (Lord Spencer) to suppress newspapers, make arrests, and proclaim meetings. The Act took charges of intimidation, conspiracy, riot, assault upon and obstruction of officers of the law, away from juries, who were subject to popular passion and mob intimidation, and conferred them upon the resident magistrates instead.

Lord Spencer used his new powers to the full. In 1883 four of the Phoenix Park murderers were hanged, and immediately things changed for the better. In the next two years agrarian crime fell from two thousand six hundred and thirty-five outrages to seven hundred and sixty-two.

v

In 1884 Franchise Reform came to the fore again. The Reform Act of 1832 seemed revolutionary to its

generation, yet it only increased the electorate by five hundred thousand. Mr. Disraeli's Act of 1867 had, by extending the franchise to borough householders, brought in a million voters more. Gladstone now proposed to give householders in the country the same right to vote as Mr. Disraeli had given to householders in the towns. This brought in one and a half million voters more and resulted in a total electorate of five millions.

The measure, which passed the House of Commons with ease, was thrown out by the House of Lords. In the country Gladstone's popularity was undiminished and an ugly agitation sprang up against the Upper Chamber. There was talk of 'mending or ending' that body. The Queen expressed herself in a flurry of letters heavily underlined. Tennyson, who was now the Poet Laureate, tendered a quantity of metrical advice:

Steersman, be not precipitate in thine act
Of steering, for the river here, my friend,
Parts in two channels, moving to an end—
This goes straight forward to the cataract;
That streams about the bend.
But tho' the cataract seems the nearer way,
Whate'er the crowd on either bank may say,
Take thou 'the bend', 'twill save thee many a day.

In the upshot Gladstone 'took the bend', he compromised with the House of Lords. The price he paid was a redistribution of seats. Boroughs with less than fifteen thousand inhabitants lost their members; those with less than fifty thousand were made one-member constituencies (with the sole exception of the City of London, reduced to two); all those over fifty thousand were given two members.

But even into the franchise question Ireland obtruded itself. Should the Irish rural districts have the extended franchise or should they not? Representatives of the Anglo-Irish gentry warned the House that it was taking

a grave step. They pointed out that out of seven hundred and sixty thousand inhabited houses in Ireland four hundred and thirty-five thousand were rated at one pound and under; that 40 per cent of those householders could not read or write. 'The most uninstructed multitude to be found in Western Europe', wrote one who knew them well. Lord Waterford foretold that 'if the franchise in Ireland is extended, the days of Home Rule cannot be far distant'.

Gladstone had a hard choice. Such arguments weighed with him. But it would be so patently illogical and unfair to discriminate against the Irish that he dared not face the uproar and bloodshed that would certainly overwhelm the country were he to do so. The step had to be taken and he took it firmly and alive to all its implications.

The results bore out to the letter the most dismal warnings. The power of the landed gentry in Ireland was absolutely shattered. Liberalism went out of Irish public life. The representatives of every constituency, outside Ulster, 85 members out of 103, were Nationalists pledged in advance to sit, to vote, and to act at the dictates of an American-paid caucus. 'I have a Parliament for Ireland within the hollow of my hand', said Parnell.

VI

All the time that Gladstone was dealing honourably with Parnell the latter was intriguing behind the Government's back. In August 1885 the Crimes Act, which had successfully restored law and order to Ireland, must automatically come to an end. In May, Gladstone announced that certain clauses would have to be continued. Parnell cast about for a way to end an Act that so seriously hampered the style of argument he favoured most. Obstruction at Westminster was no longer any good; destruction in Ireland was decidedly unhealthy.

With astonishing sharpness and astounding lack of principle he saw a chance of joining the Conservative opposition to defeat the Liberal Government.

He approached Lord Salisbury. For some weeks the Conservative leaders considered his proposal with 'immense deliberation'. Then, with much delicacy lest it should upset some of the stupidly honest rank and file the Conservative Faust made his compact with the Nationalist Mephisto. Thirty-seven years later (in 1922) Faust had to pay the price. The new combination outvoted the Ministry by twelve votes on a resolution in the 1885 Budget, and Gladstone resigned.

Lord Salisbury formed an administration immediately.

Secure in his new position, Parnell launched his great attack on Lord Spencer. He tabled a motion calling attention to the maladministration of the criminal law. It was a stormy debate that followed. The Nationalists attacked the Lord Lieutenant, the Judges, the Law Officers, the Magistrates—in fact the whole machinery of justice—with great vehemence and utter unfairness. The Conservative leaders sat there to acquiesce in the slander of the Crown's most loyal and devoted servants. And Lord Salisbury threw the Lord Lieutenant overboard. But Conservatives in the House and in the country were puzzled and disgusted. When the general election came at the end of that November, the electors showed their opinion of these manœuvres. They returned:

335 Liberals; and
249 Conservatives.

In southern Ireland eighty-six Nationalists came back to hold the balance. In Ulster the Liberal Party was annihilated. Orange and Green combined to sweep the board, and eighteen Nationalists and seventeen Conservatives came back to Westminster to make trouble for Mr. Gladstone.

Early in 1886 Lord Salisbury's Government was defeated. Gladstone formed his third administration.

VII

'The hope and purpose of the new Government', Gladstone had told the Midlothian electors, 'is to examine carefully whether it is not practicable to try some method of meeting the present case of Ireland and ministering to its wants more safe and more effectual, going nearer the source and seat of mischief, offering more promise of stability, than separate and restrictive criminal legislation.'

He was seventy-six years old. He had seen the world of King George IV and Byron; the abolition of slavery and the coming of the first railway train. He had breakfasted with Wilberforce; and had knelt in thanksgiving for the victory of Waterloo. In spite of all these things, or it may be because of them, he saw the future more clearly and more objectively than his colleagues or his opponents. The reckoning with Ireland must be settled, and it must be settled in full. He could see that the rate of it was mounting so swiftly that unless it were dealt with immediately it must inevitably ruin both England and Ireland too.

The gulf had grown wide since the days of the Manchester Martyrs; it had grown wider since the days of the Phoenix Park murders. Nothing less than a measure of full Home Rule for the Irish people could bridge it now. It was a high price for England to pay, and it was a high one for Gladstone. When he told Lord Hartington of it, the latter declined to join the Government. Lansdowne, Argyll, now Hartington, the old lords of the Whig aristocracy, members of those houses which for seven generations had guided the destinies of English Liberalism, were turning away from the party that they had inspired. It was an epoch in English political

history, and Gladstone knew it. But even the loss of his wealthiest and most influential supporters was not going to deter him from the course that he knew to be the right one.

At five o'clock in the morning of 8th April 1886 the first M.P.s appeared outside the House of Commons and planted their backs to the doors to be sure of a seat when they should open. By seven o'clock the Chamber was crammed. Chairs were set across the floor from the Bar to the Speaker's table. Never, they said, since Lord George Gordon had marched his 'No Popery' mob up to the Houses of Parliament had such a thing been seen in the Chamber.

At half-past four in the afternoon Gladstone walked in from behind the Speaker's chair. Instantly the electric atmosphere discharged, and burst upon burst of cheers went up from the sandwiched Radical and Irish benches. A deep hush settled as he rose. Then 'deeply, rapidly, steadily', he began to explain his Bill. In all the chequered years of Ireland's history she had known one period of prosperity and content, when in 1798 her own Parliament was sitting at College Green. It was back to those days that he proposed to lead her. There was to be an elected Irish Parliament at Dublin again. It was to have two Houses. There were to be no Irish members at Westminster. (Never again, if Gladstone could help it, was English political life to be unsettled by a third party.) The Irish Parliament was to have full powers over Irish affairs, on the condition that it should pass no laws restraining educational freedom, endowing any religion or affecting Customs and Excise. The Imperial Parliament reserved all matters touching the Crown, peace or war, foreign and colonial relations, titles of honour, trade and coinage. The police were to be a reserved service, to be ultimately handed over to the Irish Parliament, and Ireland was to contribute one-fifteenth towards the imperial revenue.

For three and a half hours the old Prime Minister spoke. With right hand uplifted he worked to his peroration. On his left sat Morley and Sir William Harcourt, his top-hat tilted over his eyes; to the right was Mr. Campbell-Bannerman. Farther back the sullen figure of John Bright loomed through the shadows.

A rapidly shifting alignment of parties was taking place. Parnell and his Nationalists were with Gladstone; so, too, was their great enemy Lord Spencer, the recent Lord Lieutenant. The Conservatives, of course, were appalled by such extreme proposals to destroy the Union. Most vigorous of all was the Orange opposition from the north-east Ulster members who, stirred alike by considerations of sentiment and commerce, were bitterly opposed to any severance from the mother country.

The Bill rent the Liberal Party like the high-priest's garment. A great public meeting was held at Her Majesty's Opera House to uphold 'the legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland'. Liberals and Conservatives, Lord Hartington and Lord Salisbury, sat side by side on the same platform. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain seceded from the Government to join these 'Unionists', and Mr. Goschen bore him company. And John Bright broke a friendship as old as the repeal of the Corn Laws. 'Our clubs and associations are making delegates of their members . . . and forgetting all principles if the interests of . . . the leader are supposed to be at stake. What will be the value of a party', he asked, 'when its whole power is laid at the disposal of a leader from whose authority no appeal is allowed?'

John Bright's attitude was the greatest blow of all. He had a great following in the country. To thousands of mechanics and artisans in the Radical north his name was equal to Gladstone's own. The Liberal rank and file began to waver. Every day a new objection came in and an old friend went out. The Bill would never pass.

Very lonely, very tired, but with his head still high, the old leader marched on. The party that his resolution had created, his resolution was destroying. But he would not withdraw a clause, he would not compromise a line. To him the path was clear; one day posterity would say that he was right.

Inexorable as Brutus, Lord Hartington moved the rejection of the Bill. 'Almost as white as the flower in his coat', the Prime Minister rose to wind up the debate. Patiently, carefully, and quietly he marshalled his arguments. Only once did he permit himself to strike at a friend who had failed him. Mr. Chamberlain had said that a dissolution had no terrors for him. 'I do not wonder at it. I do not see how a dissolution can have any terrors for him. He has trimmed his vessel, and he has touched his rudder in such a masterly way that in whichever direction the winds of heaven may blow they must fill his sails. Supposing that at an election public opinion should be very strong in favour of the Bill, my right hon. friend would then be perfectly prepared to meet that public opinion, and tell it, "I declared strongly that I adopted the principle of the Bill"'. On the other hand, if public opinion were very adverse to the Bill, he again is in complete armour, because he says, "Yes, I voted against the Bill". Supposing, again, public opinion is in favour of a very large plan for Ireland, my right hon. friend is perfectly provided for that case also. The Government plan was not large enough for him, and he proposed in his speech on the introduction of the Bill that we should have a measure on the basis of federation, which goes beyond this Bill. Lastly—and now I have very nearly boxed the compass—supposing that public opinion should take quite a different turn, and instead of wanting very large measures for Ireland should demand very small measures for Ireland, still the resources of my right hon. friend are not exhausted, because he is then able to point out that the last of his

plans was for four provincial circuits controlled from London.' All these alternatives and provisions were visibly 'creations of the vivid imagination, born of the hour and perishing with the hour, totally unavailable for the solution of a great and difficult problem'.

In words that will never be forgotten Gladstone, for the sake of the future that he saw, appealed to that rigid, stiff-collared, frock-coated assembly sitting so tightly packed through that Victorian evening.

'Now is one of the golden moments of our history . . . which may come and may go, but which rarely return, or if they return, return at long intervals, and under circumstances which no man can forecast. There was such a golden moment in 1795, on the mission of Lord Fitzwilliam . . . the Parliament of Grattan was on the point of solving the Irish problem. . . . There has been no great day of hope for Ireland since . . . till now—more than ninety years. . . .

'Ireland stands at your Bar expectant, hopeful, almost suppliant. Her words are the words of truth and soberness. She asks a blessed oblivion of the past, and in that oblivion our interest is deeper even than hers. You have been asked to-night to abide by the traditions of which we are the heirs. What traditions? By the Irish traditions? Go into the length and breadth of the world, ransack the literature of all countries, find if you can a single voice, a single book, in which the conduct of England towards Ireland is anywhere treated except with profound and bitter condemnation. Are these the traditions by which we are exhorted to stand? No, they are a sad exception to the glory of our country. They are a broad and black blot upon the pages of its history, and what we want to do is to stand by the traditions of which we are the heirs in all matters except our relations with Ireland, and to make our relation with Ireland to conform to the other traditions of our country. So we treat our traditions, so we hail the demand of Ireland

for what I call a blessed oblivion of the past. She asks also a boon for the future; and that boon for the future, unless we are much mistaken, will be a boon to us in respect of honour, no less than a boon to her in respect of happiness, prosperity, and peace. Such, sir, is her prayer. Think, I beseech you; think well, think wisely, think, not for the moment, but for the years that are to come, before you reject this Bill.'

To the last minute the division was in doubt, but 93 Liberals followed Mr. Chamberlain down the Orange road, and when the figures were taken the voting was

For the Bill 313;
Against 343.

'As I passed into his room at the House with Mr. Gladstone that night,' writes Morley, 'he seemed for the first time to bend under the crushing weight of the burden that he had taken up.'

VIII

Dissolution was inevitable, and the country plunged at once into one of the most terrific struggles of the century. Never were the Liberals more enthusiastic; but they were an army without officers. Well-nigh every man of wealth and standing had gone over with the Unionists. In the counties the Whig landowners, at best, stood aloof, leaving the Conservative influence in complete control. Often they appeared on the Conservative platforms. The whole weight of the Church went against the Government. A 'detestable Press' trumpeted prejudice and abuse. The Queen barely concealed her regard for the Unionists. She 'wishes that Mr. Gladstone would recognize in his opponents the same honesty of purpose which she would fain believe actuates him. It strikes the Queen that one can only respect those who for conscientious conviction feel

bound to separate from those they have hitherto acted with'. In the cities, the business element followed the 'business-like' arguments of that great business man Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. Everywhere fell the mighty forebodings of doom pronounced by the Radical Jeremiah John Bright. 'The heaviest and most telling attack came from Mr. Bright. Every word seemed to weigh a pound.'

Single-handed, against this amazing combination, battled a solitary tired old man. On 17th June 1886 he set off for Scotland. All along the way he spoke to little groups of faithful followers. He came to Edinburgh like an avenging angel and a single speech was enough to unseat the Unionist champion of Scotland, Mr. Goschen. On the 22nd he was in Glasgow. He spoke for an hour and twenty minutes. Three days after he was in the Manchester Free Trade Hall. The torrid heat of the meeting almost broke him down, but his friends heard him murmur, 'I must do it', and he went on. At Liverpool he spoke to six thousand in Hengler's Circus. 'Once more my voice held out in a marvellous manner. I went in bitterness and in the heat of my spirit, but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.' He came back to Hawarden to find that both Leith and Midlothian had returned him. For a moment it almost looked as if the impossible battle was really going to be won. The Queen herself was frightened. She wrote protesting against his crusade. She was 'totally surprised that he should visit places totally unconnected with his constituents. She feared that these unusual addresses and speeches at so many stations on Mr. Gladstone's journey as well as his visit to Glasgow, where there are so many Irish of the worst type, will not tend to a dispassionate consideration of a measure which so many of Mr. Gladstone's best friends feel bound to oppose.'

'Your Majesty will be the first to perceive', he replied,

‘that even if it had been possible for me to decline this great contest it is not possible for me having entered upon it to omit any means to place what I think the true issue before the country.’

He almost did it. The Liberals polled 1,344,000 votes; the Conservatives 1,041,000; the Unionists 397,000. But the returns showed heavily against the Government. The country sent to Westminster:

316 Conservatives;
74 Unionists; and
196 Liberals.

Parnell’s Nationalists came back precisely as before.

IX

Gladstone resigned, but he did not retire. Six years of Conservative Government under Lord Salisbury lay ahead, and throughout those years there was only one factor which kept him in public life: Ireland. As he told Lord Acton a few months after, ‘I have indeed one temptation to haste, namely, that the hour may come for me to say farewell and claim my retirement; but inasmuch as I remain *in situ* for the Irish question only, I cannot be so foolish as to allow myself to ruin by precipitancy my own purpose.’

With the defeat of the Home Rule Bill, Ireland’s troubles began all over again. On many estates the tenants adopted a ‘plan of campaign’. Each contributed what he thought to be a reasonable rent to a common pool. Then in a body they asked the landlord to take or leave it. If he left it he got nothing; the money went to pay the costs of fighting eviction proceedings. ‘Moon-lighters’ made trouble in Kerry by shooting at landlords, and Sir Redvers Buller was dispatched to put them down by military force. But when Buller had seen conditions for himself he declared somewhat unexpectedly that

rents were too high. 'You have got a very ignorant, poor people,' he said, 'and the law should look after them, instead of which it has only looked after the rich.'

To Gladstone the 'plan of campaign' appeared illegal but understandable. 'It was', he told a Newcastle audience in the summer of 1887, 'one of those devices that cannot be reconciled with the principles of law and order in a civilized country. Yet we all know that such devices are the certain result of misgovernment. With respect to this particular instance, if the plan be blameable (I cannot deny that I feel it difficult to acquit any such plan) I feel its authors are not one-tenth part so blameable as the Government whose contemptuous refusal of what they have now granted was the parent and source of the mischief.'

More and more Lord Salisbury was driven to coercion. He passed a new Crimes Bill tightening up the old one, and sent Mr. Arthur Balfour out as Chief Secretary. Evictions began to develop into pitched battles, and medals were struck to commemorate any unusually stout resistance. Twenty-three Irish Members of Parliament were thrown into prison. The Lord Mayor of Dublin was brought up in court in his robes of office, attended by the Corporation, also robed. At Mitchelstown there was a clash with the constabulary and two persons were shot dead. The parish priest of Gweedore was arrested coming out of Mass and the district inspector was killed by the infuriated worshippers.

At the height of it all, on 18th April 1887, *The Times* newspaper sprang a mine. It printed what purported to be a facsimile of a letter from Parnell approving the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke in Phoenix Park in 1882:

'DEAR SIR,

'15.5.82.

'I am not surprised at your friend's anger, but he and you should know that to denounce the murders

was the only course open to us. To do that promptly was plainly our best policy. But you can tell him and all others concerned, that though I regret the accident of Lord F. Cavendish's death, I cannot refuse to admit that Burke got no more than his deserts. You are liberty to show him this, and others whom you can trust also, but let not my address be known. He can write to the House of Commons.

'Yours very truly,

'CHAS. S. PARNELL'

At one in the morning Parnell rose in the House and called the letter a 'villainous and bare-faced forgery'. He was received with incredulous laughter from the Conservative benches. *The Times* was infallible. Respectable opinion did not hesitate to seize this eagerly awaited opportunity to believe the worst of Parnell. Lord Salisbury used it for a personal attack on Gladstone, who had 'mixed on terms of intimacy with those whom advocacy of assassination was well known'. Liberal opinion never believed in the letter for a moment. Parnell had not always dealt quite fairly with Gladstone in the past, but in this moment when so many were turning against him he found the older man a loyal friend.

But *The Times* followed up its attack with other letters. Parnell had not only condoned the Phoenix Park murders, he had helped one of the murderers to fly the country. Inside the House and out of it Parnell clamoured piteously for the chance to clear himself before a Select Committee of the House. He even offered to face a Committee composed entirely of Conservatives. But the Government was politely obstructive. They would not give him any Committee at all. Grudgingly they conceded a Commission of three judges with wide terms of reference to inquire into the connexion

between the Irish outrages and the Irish Members of Parliament. Liberals in the House strongly resented such a departure from constitutional practice. It was Gladstone who influenced them to accept it. 'I think', he said, 'that an inquiry under thoroughly competent and impartial judges is better than none.'

The judges sat for the first time on 17th September 1888. The Conservative Attorney-General accepted the Brief for *The Times*. For more than a year the thing went on. Never was such a collection of witnesses seen at a judicial inquiry.

'There was' (writes Morley) 'the peasant from Kerry in his frieze swallow-tail and knee-breeches, and the woman in her scarlet petticoat who runs barefoot over the bog in Galway. The convicted member of a murder club was brought up in custody from Mountjoy Prison or Maryborough. One of the most popular of the Irish representatives had been fetched from his dungeon, and was to be seen wandering through the lobbies in search of his warders. Men who had been shot by Moonlighters limped into the box, and poor women in their blue-hooded cloaks told pitiful tales of midnight horror. The sharp spy was there, who disclosed sinister secrets from cities across the Atlantic, and the uncouth informer who betrayed or invented the history of rude and ferocious plots hatched at the country cross-roads, or over the peat fire in desolate cabins in Western Ireland.

'Divisional Commissioners' with their ledgers of agrarian offences, agents with bags full of figures and documents, landlords, priests, prelates, magistrates, detectives, smart members of that famous constabulary force which is the arm, eye, and ear of the Irish Government—all the characters of the Irish melodrama were crowded into the corridors, and in their turn brought out upon the stage of this surprising theatre.'

At last, on the fiftieth day of the hearing, the famous letters were brought into Court.

The manager of *The Times* was asked what made him think them genuine. He felt they were the sort of letters Mr. Parnell would be likely to write.

What had he paid for them? £2,500.

Where did they come from? The Attorney-General passed on to call a handwriting expert. The Court protested. Why did he not produce the man who had supplied the letters?

There was no help for it. The man was called, a hack journalist, named Piggott. Under the cross-examination of Sir Charles Russell he collapsed. It was clear that he had forged the letters himself. Next morning he was not in court. They traced him to Madrid, and he shot himself to escape arrest. Thus they vindicated Charles Stewart Parnell. *The Times* paid him £5,000 damages. And when he walked into the House the Liberal Party rose to cheer as one man.

Gladstone moved on 3rd March 1890 that the House deemed it to be a duty to record its reprobation of the false charges of the gravest and most odious description based on calumny and on forgery that had been brought against members of the House. The Commission which vindicated Parnell found among other things that he had worked to end the Union. To this point Gladstone now addressed himself. In his opinion, he said, it was no moral offence for an Irishman to deny the moral authority of the Act of Union. 'Yes, yes', he said, as he saw the Attorney-General taking a note of his words. 'Yes, yes, you may take my words down. I heard you examine your witness from a pedestal, as you felt, of the greatest elevation, endeavouring to press home the monstrous guilt of an Irishman who did not allow moral authority to the Act of Union. In my opinion the Englishman has far more cause to blush for the means by which that Act was obtained.'

It was Parnell's time of triumph. Edinburgh conferred its freedom upon him. London dined and feted him. He stayed with Gladstone at Hawarden, where they worked on a new Home Rule Bill.

But all the time he knew, what his entertainers did not, that he had just been cited as co-respondent in divorce proceedings at the suit of his old friend Captain O'Shea.

X

Over in Ireland a stranger might have thought that he had strayed into an occupied country. Every available wall bore its poultice of orders and warnings from resident magistrates and district inspectors. The red coats of the British infantry and the black jackets of the Royal Irish Constabulary massed frantically whenever a dozen men forgathered at a wake or a fair. Scarcely a pig could come to market without an order from Dublin Castle signed 'A. J. Balfour'. But out of it all the will of a nation dragooned but still determined bit its way remorselessly through every established institution until the clumsy futility of it all began to disgust even the few friends of Lord Salisbury's Government who were left in the country.

In 1890 it was becoming clear that the English constituencies were growing disgusted too. Liberal-Unionists began to find that the sentiments that drawing-rooms applauded were distinctly dangerous when uttered on public platforms. Liberal polls began to swell again. The Government started losing by-elections. Four years earlier seventy-seven constituencies had returned forty-seven Conservatives and thirty Liberals. By 1890 the same constituencies were represented by forty-one Liberals and thirty-six Conservatives.

In the autumn there was a contest at Eccles. Here was the acid test. Eccles was a Conservative stronghold, and the Liberal chose to fight it on the straight issue of

conciliation or coercion for Ireland. Mr. Balfour came over to expound the virtues of the Government's policy. The electors were not impressed; and for the first time in its history the place returned a Liberal. The tide was beginning to set. The great chance to save Ireland and the Union was coming after all once more to Gladstone.

XI

The Eccles result was declared in the last week of October. Twenty-six days after the Divorce Court publicly branded Parnell as an adulterer with Kitty, the wife of his friend Captain O'Shea.

On 20th November the delegates of the National Liberal Federation assembled at Sheffield for their annual meeting. The Nonconformist conscience opened the floodgates of its commination. Shocked delegate after shocked delegate from the platform and the body of the hall roared that the unholy alliance between Liberalism and adultery should be dissolved. Over innumerable plates of chips and cups of tea, in every boarding-house parlour and temperance hotel, it was agreed that Mr. Gladstone must take a strong line.

Resolutions and protestations poured in by every post to Hawarden. 'I have a bundle of letters every morning on the Parnell business, and the bundles increase. . . . All my correspondents are in unison', Gladstone wrote. John Morley and Sir William Harcourt came on from the Conference to see him. Three prospective candidates had 'bolted' already, they told him, and 'this indispensable commodity' was likely to become scarcer than ever. Unless something was done at once to remove the stigma of Charles Stewart Parnell from the political scene English Liberalism would give over the cause for which he stood.

But there was still one man in the Liberal Party who did not condemn the frailty of Parnell. If only Mr.

Gladstone would speak one word of reprobation it might make things all right—on that every Liberal Association was agreed. But Gladstone steadfastly refused to set himself up as a judge of his fellow-men. 'It was vain', says Morley, 'to tell him that the party would expect such a declaration, or that his reputation required that he should found his action on moral censure all his own.' He had stood alone before; alone he would stand again. 'What!' he cried, 'because a man is what is called leader of a party, does that constitute him a censor and a judge of faith and morals? I will not accept it. It would make life intolerable.'

Condemn Parnell he would not; but save Parnell he could not. For there was a greater thing at stake than a man's reputation—Irish Home Rule itself was cast into jeopardy at the moment it looked like being won.

On Monday afternoon, 24th November, Gladstone met three members of the shadow Cabinet and the Chief Whip at Lord Rendel's house at Carlton Gardens. 'The question was whether the present continuance of the Irish leadership with the silent assent of the British leaders did not involve decisive abstention at the polls on the day when Irish policy could once more be submitted to the electors of Great Britain.'

'I have been for four years', said Gladstone, 'endeavouring to persuade voters to support Irish autonomy. Now the voter says to me, "If a certain thing happens—namely, the retention of the Irish leadership in its present hands—I will not support Irish autonomy." How can I go on with the work?'

So they resolved that Parnell must go, and Gladstone told Morley of their conclusions in a letter to be laid before him.

'1 CARLTON GARDENS,

'Nov. 24, 1890

'MY DEAR MORLEY,

'Having arrived at a certain conclusion with regard to the continuance, at the present moment, of

Mr. Parnell's leadership of the Irish Party, I have seen Mr. McCarthy on my arrival in town, and have inquired from him whether I was likely to receive from Mr. Parnell himself any communication on the subject. Mr. McCarthy replied that he was unable to give me any information on the subject. I mentioned to him that in 1882, after the terrible murder in the Phoenix Park, Mr. Parnell, although totally removed from any idea of responsibility, had spontaneously written to me, and offered to take the Chiltern Hundreds, an offer much to his honour but one which I thought it my duty to decline.

'While clinging to the hope of a communication from Mr. Parnell, to whomsoever addressed, I thought it necessary, viewing the arrangements for the commencement of the session to-morrow, to acquaint Mr. McCarthy with the conclusion at which, after using all the means of observation and reflection in my power, I had myself arrived. It was that notwithstanding the splendid services rendered by Mr. Parnell to his country, his continuance at the present moment in the leadership would be productive of consequences disastrous in the highest degree to the cause of Ireland. I think I may be warranted in asking you so far to expand the conclusion I have given above, as to add that, the continuance I speak of would not only place many hearty and effective friends of the Irish cause in a position of great embarrassment, but would render my retention of the leadership of the Liberal Party, based as it has been mainly upon the prosecution of the Irish cause, almost a nullity. This explanation of my views I begged Mr. McCarthy to regard as confidential, and not intended for his colleagues generally, if he found that Mr. Parnell contemplated spontaneous action; but I also begged that he would make known to the Irish Party, at their meeting to-morrow afternoon, that

such was my conclusion, if he should find that Mr. Parnell had not in contemplation any step of the nature indicated. I now write to you, in case Mr. McCarthy should be unable to communicate with Mr. Parnell, as I understand you may possibly have an opening to-morrow through another channel. Should you have such an opening, I beg you to make known to Mr. Parnell the conclusion itself, which I have stated in the earlier part of this letter. I have thought it best to put it in terms simple and direct, much as I should have desired, had it lain within my power, to alleviate the painful nature of the situation. As respects the manner of conveying what my public duty has made it an obligation to say, I rely entirely on your good feeling, tact, and judgment.

‘Believe me, sincerely yours,

‘W. E. GLADSTONE’

Parnell struggled to the last. He would not resign the leadership. He split his following from top to bottom. He dashed about Ireland ‘like a man possessed’, speaking for his own candidates who were always beaten. He attacked Gladstone, recklessly betraying the confidences of the past; he fought the Roman Catholic bishops. And all in vain. Morley has told how ‘undaunted by repulse upon repulse he tore over from England to Ireland and back again week after week, month after month, hoarse and haggard, seamed by sombre passions, waving the shreds of a tattered flag’.

His only comfort in those days was Kitty O’Shea (she was Mrs. Parnell now), who fought so bravely to keep up his spirits and his hopes in his last mad fight against the world. It was more than she or any one could do. At the end of one of his unsuccessful electoral campaigns a friend of former days urged him ‘not to rack himself out with incessant travelling and speech-making’. ‘No,

no,' Parnell answered, 'the travelling and speech-making do me on the whole a great deal of good.' Fourteen days after he was dead in his forty-fifth year.

XII

In 1892 the country was come to the general election. Parnell's ghost still stalked in the Nationalist ranks; and the squalid tale had cast a gloom over the Liberal and Radical Home Rulers in England as well. All the drive and enthusiasm seemed to have ebbed out of Her Majesty's Opposition. Even so, Gladstone still kept his eyes fixed on the old objective. 'The truth is,' he said to Morley, 'we're both chained to the oar; I am chained to the oar; you are chained.'

In the summer the constituencies polled. The country was lukewarm. The pendulum swung, but very slightly. The figures were:

Liberals	274	Conservatives	268
Nationalists	81	Liberal-Unionists	47
<hr/>		<hr/>	
Total	359	Total	315

Home Rule majority: 44.

It was a very small majority for a very great issue.

And the leader was old. He was eighty-three. Time was beginning to ravage that superb physique. One of those eagle eyes was blinded by a cataract, and already 'a white speck' had showed itself in the other. 'One white speck I can do with,' he laughed, 'but if the one becomes many it will be a bad business.'

John Morley got the Irish Secretaryship. He worked out with his veteran chief the heads of the new Home Rule Bill. Five and six hours out of the short December days they spent together on it at Hawarden. And all the time the sight of that last eye flickered painfully, and the old man's hearing grew more dim.

It was a complicated problem. If Ireland was to have her own Parliament was she to be represented at Westminster too? If not, then it would be taxation without representation all over again (since Ireland was still to contribute to the British Exchequer). If so, then Ireland would be able to meddle in British affairs while Britain would be excluded from Irish ones. The second alternative, bad as it was, Gladstone in the end adopted, and the new Bill provided that eighty Irish members should still sit and vote at Westminster while Ireland's own Parliament was sitting at Dublin.

Gladstone moved the Second Reading on the 6th April 1893. The old man whom every friend and every circumstance had conspired to defeat once more faced the House of Commons undaunted. 'That old hero of yours is a miracle', said a hostile Irish peer. He spoke for an hour and a half efficiently and concisely as a man of fifty. Whether, when and how this great controversy was to end he demanded of the House. And he stated again his own faith undimmed by the many years.

'There can be no more melancholy and, in the last result, no more degrading spectacle upon earth than the spectacle of oppression, or of wrong in whatever form, inflicted by the deliberate act of a nation upon another nation, especially by the deliberate act of such a country as Great Britain upon such a country as Ireland. But, on the other hand, there can be no nobler spectacle than that which we think is now dawning upon us, the spectacle of a nation deliberately set on the removal of injustice, deliberately determined to break—not through terror and not in haste, but under the sole influence of duty and honour—determined to break with whatever remains still existing of an evil tradition, and determined in that way at once to pay a debt of justice and to consult by a bold, wide, and good act its own interests and its own honour.'

At the Prime Minister's side sat the new Home

Secretary, Mr. H. H. Asquith, of whom at that time very little was known. Overawed by his admiration for his veteran leader, he was indignant to see him so relentlessly pursued by enemies, so shamelessly betrayed by his former friends. All the generous wrath that Gladstone had felt for Peel's sake nearly fifty years ago, Asquith felt for Gladstone now. His eloquence fired by his emotions profoundly stirred the House and members said that this was the coming man.

The Bill carried its Second Reading by 347 against 304. The Nationalists cheered for Gladstone when he walked back from the Division Lobby. But when a certain William Redmond called for cheers for Parnell they only laughed.

All over the country a fierce agitation was whipped up against the Bill. Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham said it was 'forged in the lower regions'. Lord Salisbury in Covent Garden accused Gladstone of 'knocking the keystone out of the arch of the British Constitution'. Twelve hundred Irish Loyalists and eight hundred Ulster Volunteers attended a demonstration in the Albert Hall where the Duke of Abercorn said 'it pronounced on Ireland a sentence of perpetual poverty only relieved by taxation received for alcoholic stimulants'. And the Duke of Argyll declared Mr. Gladstone 'talked transcendental nonsense and they might as well argue with the dervish on the Nile'. Simpler folks followed the struggle with less vehemence but with no less emotion. All over Britain and Ireland millions waited and hoped. Was that century-old quarrel really to be settled at last? Would Britain really be generous for once before it was too late? 'The nicht afore Geordie Paul died . . . there he was sitting in the corner of his bed, sae weak he could na get on more than ane arm o' his jacket, but he had the paper propped against the other and the last words he said to me were: "There's ae thing, Liz, if I could only see that Irish question settled".'

The Bill went on to Committee. It took sixty-three sittings, and the old Gladstone flung into it all that remained of his strength in one last magnificent struggle to gain his objective. Single-handed, he took on the opposition. He never flagged. He spoke again and again. Every parliamentary trick was used to embarrass him. But finally he wore them out. Their stock of arguments ran dry. Five votes of censure were moved in eight weeks about the state of the County of Clare—and they could hardly move a sixth. At last the end came, the last amendment was dealt with, the last clause was passed. 'Amidst high excitement and the sound of cheering that promised never to die away the House gradually melted into the lobbies. Mr. Gladstone, exhausted with his effort, chatted to Mr. Morley on the Treasury Bench. Except for these two the Government side was deserted, and the Conservatives had already disappeared. The Nationalists sat shoulder to shoulder, a solid phalanx. They eyed the Prime Minister with eager intent, and as soon as the venerable statesman rose to walk out of the House, they sprang to their feet and rent the air with wild hurrahs.'

The Third Reading was carried 301 against 267, and the Bill was through the House of Commons at last.

It came to the House of Lords. Like snails that creep from crannies appeared a host of peers whose existence most men had long forgotten. By far the larger part had never attended a debate in their lives. There were men who every one imagined were in the colonies, men who every one imagined never left their houses, men who every one imagined had been dead for years.

Loudly let the trumpet bray,
Gaily bang the sounding brasses,
As upon its lordly way
This unique procession passes.
Bow, bow, ye lower middle classes;
Bow ye, tradesmen, bow, ye masses;
Blow the trumpets, bang the brasses.

Peers of the highest station;
Paragons of legislation;
Pillars of the British nation.

In quaint old top-hats, in odd sponge-bag trousers, driven in remarkable conveyances, some of them anxious to recount how they remembered the news of Waterloo, and most of them agreeing that Peel should have been shot, they shuffled up to save the country. There could be no doubt of their unanimity. By 419 votes against 41 they threw out the Bill. This was the end. Six months later, in the March of 1894, the great statesman rose for the last time in the House of Commons.

‘For me, my duty terminates with calling the attention of this House to a fact which it is really impossible to set aside—that we are considering a part, an essential and inseparable part, of a question enormously large, a question which has become profoundly a truth, a question that will demand a settlement, and must at an early date receive that settlement from the highest authority.’

They were his last words and they were directed to the claims of the House of Lords. Mr. Asquith heard them; and did not forget that the reckoning was still to be paid.

BRITAIN was prosperous and proud. The Queen had driven to St. Paul's to give thanks on her Diamond Jubilee with a procession that was five miles long, and in the interminable detachments of Canadian Mounted Police, Natal Carabineers and New South Wales Lancers, of Borneo Dyaks, Cypriot Zaptiehs and Royal Niger Hausas, of Resaldars, Jemadars, and Subadars innumerable the spectators saw a token that they indeed 'held dominion over palm and pine'. It was not the pride of a class, but the arrogance of a people that engulfed the land, an arrogance that screamed at you out of the head-lines in the *Daily Mail*. And look where one would there seemed enough cause for it. To consider the changes that had taken place in the lifetime of Mr. Gladstone was to catalogue a thousand and one marvels that eclipsed those of the thousand and one nights. A legionary of Hadrian could have found his way about the England of 1809; an Englishman of to-day would see little strange in the England of 1898.

In Gladstone's youth the journey from Rome to London could be accomplished precisely as quickly as in the days of Tacitus. In Gladstone's old age the Oxford undergraduate 'went up' from Paddington by the same train in the same time as he does in 1936. The years between, the years of Gladstone's life, saw the coming of telegraphs and telephones, of railways and X-rays, of wireless, and motor-cars, and electric light. He had found the House of Commons discussing slavery; he left it debating women's suffrage. Canning had been his master: Asquith was his pupil. Byron's sun was setting when Gladstone was born: Bernard Shaw's was rising when Gladstone died.

And withal there was unbounded confidence and widespread content. Society was no longer on the brink

of a Revolution as he had found it. Between the Chartist Petition and Keir Hardie's election there had indeed been a revolution, but it was a revolution in the outlook and the condition of the masses of the people. The two-thirds of the nation which worked with its hands no longer slept in a cellar nor looked on the State as a natural enemy. They had become partners in the State themselves; they were becoming property-owners in it.

The security of Jubilee England was absolute. Nothing and nobody appeared to shake it. Far away in St. Petersburg some one called Lenin had just led a factory strike; but on the blaze of Victorian glory and Victorian confidence he cast no shadow.

'I have presided over a great Revolution', Gladstone said. And to the security and the solidity none had contributed more than he. Free Trade—Gladstone's economy, Gladstone's finance—had guided Britain from the hungry forties and into the satiate nineties.

But the people seldom saw the author of their good fortune now. His jolly, infectious laugh was absent from the dinner-tables of his friends. The House had become a dreary place without that good-natured wit of the Grand Old Man which in the old days had so often sent the whole Chamber into peals of laughter. London was altogether a poorer place since he had left it.

The days were gone when 'to see and hear him at the dinner-table (in the midst of a parliamentary crisis) one would imagine he had spent an idle day'; when 'he talked so gaily of the poor law and caricatures and omnibuses and Dante so that whatever subjects he touched upon was for the moment the most interesting in the world'.

His time was chiefly spent now at Hawarden, where he was busy translating Horace into English verse and editing Bishop Butler's *Sermons*, save when his generous indignation dragged him out to denounce the latest Turkish atrocity from some north country platform.



A RAGAMUFFIN HUSBAND AND A RANTIPOLING WIFE
Photograph of an "alfresco luncheon," Blackraig, Perthshire, 1893

He had aged rapidly since retiring from public life. He was nearly blind, and his brain was beginning to cloud. The great lion head and the broad shoulders seemed too heavy for the frail old body which had begun to droop beneath its load.

But it was a majestic old age, and a contented one. With faith unshaken he looked forward to the future, never doubting, serenely thankful for the past with its many blessings. The greatest was with him still. Catherine had always loved and understood him, understood him so well that when a friend, startled one evening by one of those more embarrassing encounters of his rescue work, asked, 'What will Mrs. Gladstone say if you take this woman home?' he answered: 'Why, it is to Mrs. Gladstone I am taking her.' And in Catherine he had all the companionship he ever asked or needed, though they no longer waltzed on the hearth-rug singing their old duet:

A ragamuffin husband and a rantipoling wife,
We'll fiddle it and scrape it through the ups and downs of life,

since there were no more ups and downs on the even pathway of their happiness.

Old rivalries were long forgotten and the ancient bitterness of party conflict was stilled. Indeed he no longer belonged to a party but to a people, perhaps to an epoch. The new generation saw more than a man in him; they saw a living monument to a more steadfast and balanced age. In those noisy days of shifting values they looked with wondering envy upon a character so mighty and so steadfast in belief.

For in the nineties character was becoming rare, and to believe was no longer the thing. As a contemporary magazine writer put it: 'The roller of industrialism, of bureaucracy, of the mode, had passed over the world and erased originality.' Men and women moulded to pattern packed noisy supper-parties at the Savoy or

paraded in boisterous unison through the barn dance and 'the Washington Post' in subscription dances at the Queen's Gate Hall. 'To be *there* was the greatest thing. But where? No one knows. Where the others of the same class are, or at least where they are supposed to be. The charm for every one simply consists in being where every one else is.'

In this world where all originality was being lost, soulful young women and esoteric young men were wildly seeking it with new poses and laboured epigrams duly set out in the Yellow Book.

What used to take weeks could now be done in hours, so there was a constant rush after the new. 'Not to be new is in these days to be nothing.' Everything was 'new' that was not *fin de siècle*. There was a 'New Art', 'a New Dandyism', and a 'new woman'. A monthly magazine wrote of 'the new Voluptuousness which leads up to bloodshedding'. There was, if one were to believe that lately fallen meteor, Oscar Wilde (still shining with a tarnished splendour in Bohemia), a New Hedonism. 'Its aim was to be experience itself and not the fruits of experience . . . to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is but a moment.'

For Gladstone all this meant rather less than the words of the 'new' song 'Ta-ra-ra-bom-de-ay' which every one was singing and which in its boisterous meaninglessness expressed perhaps the spirit of the time more than all the volumes of the Yellow Book.

At the end of the nineteenth century he still half belonged to the eighteenth. In his own person he was something of a bridge between the two. The creed for which he had created the Liberal Party because the Tory Party refused to accept it was a compound of the eighteenth-century regard for privilege and the nineteenth-century worship of service. But it was in the eighteenth century (which lasted in England till the first Reform Bill) that he had been brought up. It had

stamped upon him the impress of the Georgian gentleman. And because it was Oxford which had marked him with it, it was when he visited Oxford that it always came out most clearly.

'I am sure, Sir William,' he said to a Liberal Don one evening at All Souls, 'that your memory will bear me out in saying that a valuable element was lost to our social life with the disappearance of noblemen and gentleman commoners.' He assured the Senior Common Room that Wellington had been right in 1830 to say that the Constitution was incapable of improvement, since 'the control exercised by the House of Lords through the pocket boroughs formed a real equilibrium between both Houses which the Reform Bill had upset'. He thought that the unreformed House would have passed all the beneficial laws of the century.

All this to those who understood was the mark not of a Party but of a Period. When he complained that the presence of twenty thousand unbaptized people in a Midland manufacturing town was a disgrace to the local landowner, when he said, slapping the mahogany table three times, 'The Public School system is the greatest thing in England', he was absolutely consistent and faithful to his own philosophy.

He said, 'Nothing but disappointment awaits the working class if they yield to the exaggerated anticipations held out by the Labour Party. Socialism will not be in my day, but it is alarming. . . .'

But he added, 'It is the upper classes who are largely responsible.'

For privilege—even the privilege that set a gold tassel on the cap of a nobleman *in statu pupillari*—he kept a deep respect.

But he had no use and no sympathy for privilege that did not fulfil its responsibility, whether in a landowner who did not have his tenants baptized or in a

working man who threw away his vote on the exaggerated anticipations held out by the Labour Party.

It was not only Socialism that he distrusted for its shallowness. The essential solidity of the Oxford he had known was gone. People did not read so widely and think so deeply as they had done in his time. There was a spate of manuals, text-books, and such-like aids to study that made the taking of a degree an easy matter and its possession at least in his opinion a worthless one. He observed a similar slovenliness in other things. He protested against the dress which the 'men see fit to wear in the High Street. The spectacle of men in boating costume . . . indeed in very scanty costume in the High Street' was 'almost shocking' to one who even at the age of eighty-one always went out wearing his cap and gown.

He distrusted changes. He could not reconcile himself to married Fellows or women's colleges. 'I have left Mrs. Gladstone at home because there are too many ladies in Oxford already', he said.

Spiteful people thought he affected a High Toryism to please the men he met in Oxford. But he was totally incapable of affectation. It was simply that he had remained loyal to the ideals of his youth—even if he had decided that certain deductions he then made from those ideals had been false ones. And to the world in which those ideals had first been formed he still looked back with regret.

He could not easily be induced to discuss anything that had happened in the last fifty years. He seemed to show no interest in the world of Salisbury and Parnell. Disraeli he never mentioned. It was of Melbourne and Peel, of Palmerston and the Duke of Wellington that he loved to speak. He talked freely of Cobden: 'He had the most generous mind and one of the most sensitive, but the way that man worshipped Peel, stuck by Peel, surrendered his judgment to him!' Was he thinking perhaps unwittingly about himself?

'I knew Princess Lieven,' he told them one evening; 'she flattered and petted and toadied Grey till she could twist him round her little finger.' He described how deeply Eldon used to drink; and how vigorously the old Duke of Cambridge used to swear, so that, being told to convey a reprimand from the Queen to an officer who cursed his men, he said, 'Her Majesty heard you swear and she's damned if she will stand any more of it.'

He recalled the time he saw Kean acting on the evening after the Battle of Magenta, when his declamation of an anti-French passage in Shakespeare for the first time failed to move the enthusiasm of his audience. And he passed on to marvel at the high prices which in these days of mediocrity men would pay for merit. He commented on the great sums that were paid to Patti for her singing, and to Quaritch for his early editions of books. ('It's the Americans who give the long prices for early editions, Quaritch tells me.')

Then he would get up, hunt round for his cap and gown (he always forgot where he had left them) and, fully arrayed in academical costume, make his way back to All Souls. As he went he raised his great gamp umbrella to every one who saluted him in the street. With the same unaffected sincerity he greeted the most venerable Head of a College and the youngest Balliol Radical, the solid citizen of North Oxford and the dirtiest sweeper of St. Ebbes, and the row of cabmen opposite Queen's who lined up and doffed their hats whenever he went by.

The crustiest canon in Christ Church 'could forgive him much for the light he had shed on St. Paul'. Wondering Fellows sighed after the old courtesy he recalled, for he 'seemed to carry without affectation the gracious manners of a former age'.

'Every man down to the humblest college servant felt the better for being in his presence', wrote a young

Conservative Don. 'He was much the finest gentleman I ever met.'

.

Spring came to Oxford in 1898 as she had come a thousand times before. Lilac blew over Addison's Walk, and in Christ Church meadows the hawthorn burned. The Cherwell danced under Magdalen arches, the limes were green again in Trinity Garden. Up the High and through the Broad surged the new generation on a May morning, restless and eager to face the world in the autumn. As they passed by the Sheldonian they met little groups of worried Dons, the Hebdomadal Council had been sitting. There was bad news from Hawarden, where the Old Man was sinking fast, and the University had resolved on a unanimous expression of its sympathy:

'We pray that the Almighty may lighten the load of suffering which you bear with such heroic resignation.'

The prayer was answered. On 19th May 1898 the great heart beat for the last time.
It was Ascension Day.

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